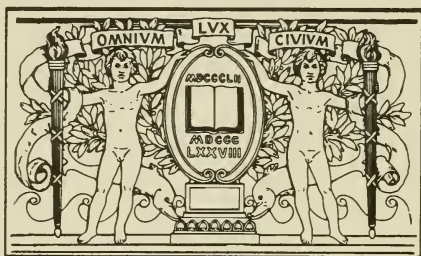


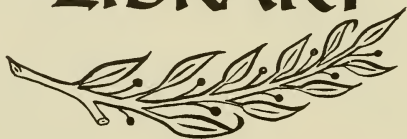
GUMPTION



FOWLER



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GUMPTION

Wm. H. Allen



*Day by day he pilgrimaged to the outlying towns,
curing as he went.*

GUMPTION

THE PROGRESSIONS OF
NEWSON NEW

BY

NATHANIEL C. FOWLER, JR.



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ILLUSTRATIONS

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- “Day by day he pilgrimaged to the outlying
towns, curing as he went” *Frontispiece*
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only local field of equality” “ 146
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Herald?” “ 272
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I

A HOME-SHAKEN emulsion of self-respect, self-conceit, and an apparent or real appropriateness, suggest that I begin my story with my beginning.

Neither here, nor anywhere else in this book, do I humbly or otherwise apologize for the ever-present use of the capital "I."

"I" is by me made the active character, and without "I" I could n't consistently play my story.

I, Newson New, began to begin at 2 p. m., February 27, 1858, in the sanded and salted village of Yarmouth, Barnstable County, Cape Cod, Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Adding the discount for my parents' inflated opinion of my infantile self to that of what our neighbors said, or thought without saying, the result indicates that I, as a baby, was just another helpless, crying, spewing lump of expectation; an animate excuse for any sort or kind of characteristic or promise desired to substantiate the pride, pleasure, theory, hobby, prejudice, or spite of the army of aunts and other accessories

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which swarmed about my cradle, pinched my flabby toes, and scratched or sponged me with the lips of conventional self-gratification.

The Yarmouth of '58 was n't the biggest nor the smallest of the irregularly located and harum-scarum scattered Cape towns. It was the elbow-joint of the great Cape arm, which, seemingly tired of its salt-water bath, lifted its crooked self from out of the ocean's bed to be New England's beckoning finger of perpetual welcome to all over-sea creation.

Yarmouth was n't a barren town. It had earthy soil of its own, trees, shrubs, and other verdant things born on its premises. It stood between the villages of not-so-much-sand on the one side, and the almost-all-sand and all-sand towns on the other.

Some of Yarmouth's parts did n't look like Cape Cod.

Physically, Yarmouth was a mongrel town, born of an earthy father and a sandy mother. It was the ocean-man's bedroom, where former activity became dormant and slept its full twenty-four hours a day.

Outside of the handful of store-keepers,

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the quarter of a dozen lawyers, the twelfth of a dozen bankers, the few ministers and teachers, the one doctor, the depot-master, the postmaster, the diggers in sand and soil, and the few fishers who fished one day a week, every other week, holiday weeks excepted, nobody in Yarmouth did anything with enough regularity to suggest that he was working.

Yarmouth's prime citizens were vacation-serving sailors and ex-ploughers of the Deep.

Most of them had been full-fledged captains, web-footed by nature, and sea-faring by inclination; commanders of barks and ships in those glorious days of individualism, when men of snap and push worked for themselves, officered their own crafts, and had the major part of what they earned.

Early Yarmouth was a captain's town, the resting-place of some of the bravest heroes who ever walked a deck, men who were men, men all through, the fathers of progress. Yarmouth was their last berth on earth. Weather-beaten by the seas of all-round-the-world, they cast their final anchor on

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Yarmouth's shores, and quietly let Time steer them into Eternity's Harbor.

Their home-houses were museums of the queer and of the very queer, — little exhibits of the whole world's skilfulness. Their libraries were small, for in those days books were more scarce than now, and men held in their heads what to-day they keep on their shelves.

These Yarmouthers were too old and too tired to do anything; so they did n't; and Yarmouth accommodated herself to their conditions.

"Be a gentleman," was Yarmouth's moral law.

"Be conventional," was Yarmouth's code of honor.

"Don't stir up the IS," was Yarmouth's rule of action.

Dear old Yarmouth! I can see her now, restfully sleeping in her contentment, dreamless in her slumbers, with no thought of the morrow save of building to-morrow's fire and of peeling to-morrow's potatoes.

Yarmouth was what she was, and she did n't try to be what she was n't; consequently she was a success.

II

FATHER was a doctor, — a genuine, hemp-sewed, corn-fed country physician, of the gray-haired class of our oldest school. He neither wore kid gloves nor practised in them. His patients either had to get well or die, with no loitering on the way. He felt the pulse with one hand and poured Castor Oil with the other.

“Put your trust in ‘Castor’” was father’s creed, and he lived it and administered it.

Castor Oil was both his diagnoser and his curer. He gave it anyway. If it worked, well and good; if not, he used some other lubricant, or else administered liberal doses of more energetic concoctions. There were no milk-and-water mixtures in his medicine-case.

But Castor Oil first; Castor Oil, the disease-seeking chaser of everything within its reach; and by the Great Tablespoon it reached about everything.

Dear old man, how he loved to pour his strenuous oil into the struggling mouths, and to watch the distorted faces indicate its tortuous way as it sped on, and on, and anon,

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pushing before it the foolhardy obstacles which dared dispute its right of way.

Everybody said, the other doctors not protesting, that father was the best physician on the Cape. His fame lodged everywhere, from the County line to the Cape end-crook. Day by day, his old white mare, his one-horse chaise, and his well-filled oil-can pilgrimaged to the outlying towns, curing as they went.

If the case was ordinary, an ordinary dose of Castor Oil. If the case was obstinate, more oil to smooth disease's path away. If the case was too easy, still some oil, that the patient should not forget his illness and might be effectively lubricated against relapse.

Woe to the shamming patient, the enjoy-sickness kind, with nothing the matter with him! Father made something the matter with him, or made him feel there was something the matter with him, with relentless rapidity.

Literally, father poured oil upon the troubles of suffering humanity, and he poured it well.

Father was a great student. When he was n't oiling he was reading something,—

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always something heavy, something mighty heavy, too heavy to be lifted and carried around. He read as a miser hoards; that he might have all of it, and own it without encumbrances. The dusty books on the town library shelves were dusted by him alone. What others did n't read, he read.

He fairly revelled in the "guesstorial" histories of little known eras, and loved to grope in the shadows of prehistoric twilight, and to stub his toes against the rocks of forgotten ages. He would quiet his headaches with musty doses of the non-understandable.

He knew more about the unknown than many people knew about the known. He was an exitless store-house of all the dry bones of art, science, and literature, — the unmoistened cinders of long-dead fires. When anybody wanted to know something not worth knowing about, he asked father about it, and father told him.

But with all his eccentricities, and his overdoings, father did n't neglect his profession; oiling first, reading afterward. He kept the birth-recorder busier than the tombstone-cutter.

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The attractiveness of opposites was exemplified in my parents' mutual matrimonial selection. When my to-be-father went my to-be-mother hunting, he found the one woman in all womandom farthest removed from what he was or ever could be.

Father's and mother's resemblance to each other was limited to their representativeness of humankind. Father was as tough as a seashore-seasoned plough-ox; and he knew it, and gloried in it. He felt his strength, and used it. He was the strongest man on Cape Cod, — was able to stand more, and he did stand more, than anybody else. It never occurred to him to take care of himself. Really, he hardly knew he had a physical body, and certainly he never gave it any attention. He outraged nature, and nature did n't seem to retaliate.

Mother thought she was as weak as a chilled fly of autumn. She was n't, but she thought she was, and governed herself accordingly.

Father was nervous; every nerve he had stood on its edge and quarrelled with its neighbors.

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Mother had n't any locatable nerves, as ordinary nerves go. She suffered, or thought she did, from three-quarters of all the weaknesses woman is heir to, but the seat of her trouble never got below her head.

Father never slept. Mother slept her eight full hours a day.

If father wanted anything, all Cape Cod knew it, and hustled to help him to get it.

If mother wanted anything, she considered the matter until she forgot she wanted it, and consequently she did n't get it.

Father believed in "Activanity."

Mother worshipped "Passivanity."

Father trusted in God, and went armed.

Mother trusted in God, and kept her powder wet.

But they got along nicely together. When mother did anything father did n't like, or did n't do something he wanted her to do, he called an immediate session, and the assembly voted unanimously his way.

If father's actions did n't please mother, she prayed over them, and Heaven answered her prayer by making her forget all about them.

Mother had the record of never doing any-

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thing wrong. Maybe she was never actively engaged in aggressive right-doing; but she never, never did anything she should n't have done. She moved in her own way; often got in her own way without knowing it; and travelled in the way of her fathers and her mothers. She kept right in the middle of the old-fashioned road, shied neither to the right nor to the left, but plodded on and on, doing the same to-day that she did yesterday, and sure to do to-morrow the same that she had done to-day.

You always knew where mother was. She was where she ought to be, and never anywhere else. Her duty was cut deeply into the inner tablets of her conscience, and neither change of time, nor experience, nor policy, nor modern necessity could switch her off the track her ancestors had spiked down for her to travel on.

She kept standing where she had always stood, on the spot where her family had stood before her; resting calmly, quietly, and contentedly upon her ancestral platform of duty; never shirking conventional responsibility, but never opposing anything

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not checked as sin in her limited lexicon of action.

If her platform props were weather worn, it was n't her fault; if some of the planks were weak, she did n't make them so, and she knew not how to strengthen them.

She judged not, neither was she judged. She lived a life of duty-doing as she saw it, actively opposing nobody and passively condemning the things universally called wrong. Conditions set her pace, and she never tried to lag or spurt. She was happy, for her trust in God was complete. If things went wrong, she told God about them; simply notified Him, closed her Book of Concern, and trustfully went to sleep.

The wind might blow the harder. What matter! She had told God that the tempest was raging. She never carried trouble or responsibility into the night. She let God assume it all.

Mother's God was her father's God and her mother's God, the churchy God of by-gone days. This God was real to her, and she worshipped Him with her whole heart and soul.

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The full, strong light of a rounded Christianity, of Christian activity, of Christian responsibility, of the superlative love of Christianity, which shone all about her, only dimly illumined her inner self. Conventionality's curtain barred it out, and she knew not how to lift it. Even in her responsive days others were so much like her that there were none, or but few, who knew how to melt the shadows and let the warmth of oxygenic Christianity vitalize the inner cells in which is lodged the life of a radiating love.

Such a wife suited father. He could do as he pleased, absolutely and completely. He was master, and none disputed his right to have his own way. He had everything that materiality could give. Breakfast was never late; dinner was always on time; supper's tea was ever hot; father's clothes were button-full, his shirts were wrinkle-less, his stockings were intact.

Housekeeping was one of the springs of mother's clock of duty, — the spring that never ran down. Everything she did she did completely, — did it till it could n't be

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done any more. Dirt, save what father and father's dog brought in, never crossed our threshold; and the dirt never had time to dry. Mother kept dust too busy to settle.

Could mother cook? My mouth waters. She was a natural-born artist-at-the-range. There was n't a cook-book about; nor a written recipe; nor a measure, — save a quart, a cup, and a spoon. She cooked by eye, ear, taste, smell, and intuition. Her guesses were more exact and more lucky than other people's measures. To see a thing was to know how to cook it. She measured by eye, temperatured by feeling, and hit it right every time. She could n't over-do anything, and nothing she did was under-done.

Mother kept one servant, — two to a house was not allowed on the Cape, — a maid-of-all-scrubbing, for that was what she did, and mother did the rest. For a woman, — whether weak or not, but supposed to be weak anyway, — mother did more work than three Cape Cod Amazons.

Mother is old now, seventy-nine or more, and as sick as she ever was; and each suc-

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ceeding year kindly refuses to rid her of her pleasurable ills. May she never get well, is my dutiful wish. Good health would kill her.

There is n't one single thing that she has to do, but nevertheless she's at something all the time. When she can't find work, she makes it. If no dirt gets into her house, she scrubs as before, that visiting dirt may feel too lonesome to stay. I tremble for her hereafter. Suppose there's neither dust nor dirt in Heaven! But perhaps she will keep on dusting. As she dusted the dusty here below, she may dust the dustless Above. She'll scrub, and rub, and clean as long as she can shake a rag or wave a duster.

Mother brought me up in her way. Father was n't at home much, and when he was, the prehistoric kept him busy. Mother had one rule, just one, one almighty one, — as her brother did, so must I do.

No matter if her brother was one of those visionary sky-scrappers who never get down to earth, who live in clouds, and who handle the *Is n't* better than the *Is*. No matter if he never had sense enough to float his non-

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sense. No matter if he parted his hair and brains in the middle, and let them heel over. No matter if he was intended for a girl, and changed at the round-up. No matter if he was too slight to cast a shadow. No matter if he had n't energy enough to keep up his circulation. No matter, — I resembled him: where and how I know not; but as he was, so must I be, and as he was handled, so must I be manipulated.

Mother gave the Future no quarter. The Past was the Supreme Ruler, the Superlative Dictator of the Present. What Is was an offshoot of what Had-Been. The Present was permeated with the Past. Sometimes I am unkind enough to feel that mother had more past than present in her present, and that she ran the present backwards and anchored it to its predecessor.

What I was did n't concern mother. What I inherited was of exclusive consequence. My smile had to be the reflection of her smile, or her father's smile, or her brother's smile. It would n't possibly be my own individual smile. My voice was the echo of some other fellow's tones.

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Mother pre-natally located everything I had, from whooping cough to bunions. What my uncle or some other relative had done, so must I do; and what my uncle or some other relative had not done, so must I not do. I could n't eat onions, because none of her mother's relatives had liked them. As no relative had ever been drowned, I could safely take all water risks.

If I had the stomach ache it was n't from green apples; it was some relative's stomach ache handed down to me. If I had been hung, she would have looked back for a cause, and she'd have found it, too.

III

WE lived in the biggest house in town, — one of those altogether right-angled buildings, box-square from the main trunk to the three box-squares of descending ells; but not a square inside. It had crooked rooms, mazed entry-ways, no two alike of anything, closets built out and pantries built in, every other room with furnace connection, and soap-stone stove rooms alternating.

Hot water was by kettle only, cold water by pump.

A bathroom? Cape Cod knew it not. The bathroom permit line was staked just south of the Boston boundary.

There were wash-bowls, wash-bowls with wash-cloths, wash-water to be rubbed on and blotted off.

Haircloth furniture, the kind that bags and shines.

Six chamber-sets, one of black walnut, which cost more than all the other upstairs stuff combined; the others, pine pedestals of unframed paintings of huts and cottages

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nobody ever lived in, because nobody ever built them; views of pasty waterfalls and mechanical woods; everything unrestful, nothing natural.

Our yard — we called such things yards then, grounds were christened later — was as large as Boston Common. One part of it was for vegetables, another for flowers, another for pear-trees, and the rest for nothing save making hay, which did n't cost much more than the imported article.

There were ten acres of pear-trees; apples don't inhabit the Cape. Our vegetable garden produced much of what we did n't want, and less of what we did want.

At a most inconvenient distance from the house, far enough away for one to freeze on the journey, was the "barn" of then or the "stable" of now.

The only reason the barn was n't nearer the house was because there was every reason why it should be. The between-lying land was useless. The barn was divided into seven municipalities: one each for cows, for pigs, for horse, for carts and carriages, for hay and grain, for wood and occasional coal, and

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the last for what did n't belong anywhere else.

In the middle of the garden was an artificial pond — lake, father called it for the first three weeks — of no benefit to the landscape and of no use in itself or to anybody. It was too small to boat in, too muddy to bathe in, too low to store water in; but it was there, the only one unconventional thing about the whole place. It gave father the only private pond on the Cape.

We had one horse; only one Cape Codder had two, and he drove one at a time out of respect for his neighbors. According to the Cape Cod code, two horses side by side, save for the stage, was sacrilege.

One horse, and only one horse, was all that Cape Cod religion, politics, and citizenship permitted, and this exclusively one horse held his caste if he went to church one day, pulled a gig on the morrow, hauled a carry-all on the next, and dragged a plough between times. Cape Cod horses were pullers of every kind of burden.

There was the carry-all, a two-seated vehicle for family use, built of all the wood

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and iron human unskilfulness could get into it. It was indestructible. No horse, even with the help of a precipice, could smash it. It carried everything, from the family and the neighbors' families to groceries and grain.

Of course we had a chaise, — Cape Cod's ship of shore, — called a one-horse chaise to distinguish it from the two-horse chaise which never struggled through Cape Cod sand. Everybody big enough to be anything above nothing had a chaise. He had to. A Cape Codder without a chaise was not a Cape Codder; and nobody but a Cape Codder, by birth or marriage, long lived on Cape Cod. There are some of the old chaise hulls left, some even in use, and none of them have completely perished. Once a Cape Cod chaise, always a Cape Cod chaise; for neither the rifled east wind nor the forest fire can destroy or put them entirely out of commission. The whole or a part of each and every one of them lives, in its entirety or in part, forever. Some of my father's chaise is in action to-day, and the rest of it is a wayside land-

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mark. Between its imperishable wheels there is straddled a cannon, and not a spoke trembles at the recoil.

We lived better than most Cape Cod folks; had more of the things that didn't grow on the Cape, and our servant girl stayed all the year round; she was steady help, not of the kind that came at cleaning periods.

Father was a great feeder. We always had too much food in storage: flour and sugar by the barrel, molasses by the hogs-head, and even meat by the half-ox.

Father's idea of economy was to buy in wholesale lots. As a side of a steer cost less per pound than the part of the steer we wanted, he got it that way, and we had steak for breakfast, roast for dinner, stew for supper, and cold-cuts between meals, until it was all gone. Then it was fish, nothing but fish — fish morning, noon, and night; and then something else.

Father bought dates by the sack, prunes by the twentieth of a ton, peaches by the crate, and everything else in the same way. Variety was n't the daily spice of our bulk-

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laden table. There was always too much of something at a time.

'T was bulk, always bulk, bulk forever, no matter if the waste brought the cost up to more than retail prices. Nothing that did n't come at wholesale ever came into our house. But we survived; every one of us had the vitality of two ordinary beings.

IV

TWO years after me, brother number one arrived on the premises; and a year afterwards another brother appeared; then another, till there were five of us — all boys, and no two alike.

Walter, the one next to me, was all boy, — a great, hearty, full-blooded, and well-rounded boyish boy. He soon kicked himself out of kilts, and went it alone in trousers.

Walter 's a man now, with whiskers, a wife, and three daughters; and he 's the head boss of 10,000 men away out West, where they do things in a day that folks hereabouts think over a month before they begin.

Walter is an industrial general, an expert at discipline, a natural and trained handler and mover of men. He 's ice-cold-blooded on week days, and sun-warm-blooded on Sundays. All that he does he does by rule, whether it be business or philanthropy, and he has a time for doing everything, but he never does two things at the same time.

He is a Chicago deacon, a Sunday hat-passer; and really he does look Sundayfied

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in his long-tailed Prince Albert as he swings up the broad aisle taking all he can get on Sundays as well as on week days.

Walter is technically honest, and is the one Chicago deacon who collects at large and does n't have to wear a bell-punch or a cash-register on his rounds. Financially, he is the smartest of the lot, and he's growing smarter every day. He has an automobile, a yacht, four horses, and three dogs. He plays golf, as he plays business, to win; and he always wins.

With Walter, to want is to have. He knows his business as a sailor knows his harbor, and he seldom strikes a rock. When he does, he neither frets nor swears; he 'phones the wreckers, takes a *perfecto* from a box with his name on it, and lets others work while he smokes.

Walter has the exclusive distinction of being the only Chicago man who didn't accept a mayoralty nomination when it was offered to him. It occurred this way. The Committee of Fourteen Hundred, representing the combined interests of self-interest, after polling their desires several majority-

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less times, "came together" on Walter. The chairman telephoned to him.

"Will you take it?" said he, in his time-saving way.

"What?" asked Walter, in his corn-buying tone.

"The mayoralty."

"No," replied Walter, and he hung up the receiver, finished reading the stock report, and forgot to tell his wife of the honor thrown at him.

George was next in the line. He followed father, has father's practice, and is the richest professional man south of Middleboro. But he didn't slide into wealth on oil.

George is modern. He has a workshop full of tools, a dipless pen, and writes fifty prescriptions a day. He stuck to the Cape, that is, he went back to the Cape after he had received his sheepskin. He'd rather be a big Cape Codder than a little Bostonian, — the medical boss of a forty-mile circuit.

George is a ladies' and gentlemen's doctor. His familiarity with humankind and society and her popular ills allows him to diagnose

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with the most pleasing and satisfactory exactness.

He gives his patients what they want or furnishes a harmless and good-tasting substitute. The oh-how-I-want-to-be-sick individual fairly radiates appreciation of him.

George treats by modern medicine, mental more-or-less science, and systematic sympathy.

"I tell you," said George to me one day, as he dismissed an office caller, "physic and sympathy, rightly mixed, will remove mountains."

Just then the telephone bell rang. Evidently the mother was at the other end of the wire.

"My dear Mrs. Weller," George was saying, "it's indeed unfortunate, superlatively unfortunate. Accept my telephonic sympathy." (A pause.) "The dear child, my favorite golden-haired baby!" (Another pause.) "Just give him a little bicarbonate of soda. Bicarbonate of soda; I mean saleratus. Yes, just a little in water. I will be right over. How's Jack?" (A long pause.) "That's good."

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"Baby sick?" I inquired.

"No. I'm going over to see it."

"What for?"

"To give it some more bicarbonate of soda and jolly its ma."

I rode over with George; occupied his man's seat. George kept a man. A Cape Cod doctor with a man! But then, George was the only one who did.

"Who's who?" I queried, as George tipped his hat according to the Ladies' Confidential Adviser's latest "What-To-Do-and-When-To-Do-It" bulletin of "Social-Laws-We-Have-Made."

"Oh, that's the president of the 'May-flowers,' treasurer of 'Our Cousins of '76,' secretary of the 'Society for the Preservation of Ancestral Asininity,' and —"

"Hold!" I exclaimed. "Let's skip the rest. Who is she?"

"My best patient; yes, best by fifty per cent. I called at her house ninety-four times last year."

"Sickly?"

"No. Not one of 'em has had anything worse than measles, and that was light."

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“Go on, I am interested.”

“Well,” continued he, “there are nine of ’em. Her husband, he counts in the census; she; two little she’s; three little he’s; her husband’s ma; and her pa. They don’t want a doctor; don’t need one ’cept once in a great while. They want ME. I sympathize with ’em; tell ’em what they want to hear. T’other day Cleopatra fell downstairs. She’s too fat to do anything but bounce. Was n’t hurt a bit; bruised a little, that’s all. They rang me up. I started right away; walked the horse till I got close to the house; then I hustled him; pulled him up in front of the door with a forty-foot cloud of dust behind me. Rushed in without ringing; intentionally stumbled three times on the stairs so that they would hear me rush. The kid was yelling like mad. Father, mother, and three quarters of the rest of the family were doing everything they could to make her yell the louder. I prescribed a liniment, which I knew would do some good, even if it was n’t needed, and wrote an internal prescription.”

“I thought you said that the child was n’t hurt. What did you give her medicine for?”

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“ Say, Newson,” replied he, “ do you suppose any well-to-do woman with a big family is going to stick to any doctor who does n’t prescribe a to-be-swallowed concoction every time he calls? That medicine did n’t do the child a bit of harm, and did the parents a big lot of good. I gave the child harmless stuff, for the benefit of the family.

“ Mental science is a big thing,” continued he. “ By itself alone it’s not worth half a continental. Make it an accessory to nature, and a companion to a lively liniment, and it’ll do a heap toward taking all the soreness out of bruises.

“ Hallo!” exclaimed he, “ there’s Mother Henness and her brood. Once in a while they suffer from green apples and other unripes. All they need is Castor Oil, — the plain, every-day, old-fashioned Castor Oil that dad used to use.

“ Do I give them plain Castor Oil? Oh, no! No self-respecting Cape Cod mother, nowadays, will pay a dollar for Castor Oil advice. I feel the pulse, look at the tongue, ask a lot of questions, assure the mother there is nothing serious the matter, and write

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a concealed Castor Oil prescription for the druggist to fill."

"A concealed prescription?" I interrupted.

"Yes. But the stuff is there just the same. I'll write you one, if you'll drive for a moment."

George pulled out a prescription pad, and in a moment handed me a slip upon which the following was written:

R	
Olei ricin	℥ \overline{ss}
Syr. acaciae	℥ \overline{iii}
Aquae destillat.	℥ \overline{v}
Olei menth. piperitae	gtt \overline{ii}
	Mx.

Sig. — Take in two doses.

"What's it all about?" I asked.

Looking at me with a twinkle in his eye, he remarked, "Two of the items are flavorings, and the others represent Castor Oil and water. The combination does the business, and pleases the entire family. And say, my boy, if you'd succeed, when doctoring the patient don't forget the family.

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“ You know, Newson,” continued he, “ that I seem to have inherited father’s natural power of diagnosis. Unless the case is very complicated, I quickly locate the trouble. Really, this prescription of mine is innocent, and there’s a true charity to it, because it makes my patients help themselves, and help my medicine; and besides — well, if it was n’t for it, there would n’t be ten coats of varnish on this gig, and my mare would n’t have cost an even thousand dollars, and this house of mine, which you admire so much, would n’t be half as large, and the grounds, instead of being beautified, would have been utilized for hay-making.”

Right or wrong, George has set his pace, and to-day he is doing just what he did then. He still travels the Cape. Like father, he cures as he goes, and he gets many dollars where other physicians, some of them as skilful as he is, laboriously work day and night for much less than half of his financial reward.

Sanford is two years younger than George, and is a rattling success as a scientist. He inherited the sensible side of father’s studi-

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ousness, and four colleges are bidding for him.

He knows about everything except money; but fortunately his wife, a Harwich hard-header, is a financier in skirts. Sanford pays over his salary to her, and she gives him an allowance.

Sanford has n't done anything very big yet, but he's going to; and every time I take up my paper I expect to see his name across three columns, and underneath an announcement of some great discovery. He certainly has the brains, the training, and the inclination, and I don't see how he's going to help making a scientific hit sooner or later.

John's the youngest, and the society sun of our five-star constellation. He's a lawyer of Boston; lives in a four-story, basement and yarded, stone-trimmed brick house, on the finicky Fenway, one of those please-consider-me-old alleged imitations of what probably never has been, with little window panes and other eccentricities which no Puritan would have been foolish enough to put up if he had known any better.

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John is in the middle eddy of the whirlpool of the smartest swim. He anticipates the wavings of the fads, and flies them a day ahead of their formal mast-headings. He spends his income a little in advance of its receipt, and debts don't bother him.

John's wife is one of those cotton-stuffed bodies, with vacuum heads and skimmed-milk skins, that do nothing save wash in almond water and dress and undress again. Her only possessions are her equity in the society corner which her mother inherited from her grandmother, and the soap-made money her father left her.

John and his family live in style, extreme style, and they have all that isn't worth having. Everything is for show, and they make a show of everything. Their boy is enjoying a football course at society's classic emporium, Half-and-Half University, that high pile of endowments which does so much to educate manliness out of boys.

Their daughter is attending daily soirées at the Misses Pollywog's school for gold-filled dunces. This Fashion Fanciers' Asylum for the Dull Daughters of the Smart Set is an

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immense success. It caters to a constituency far in excess of its accommodations. Its sessions begin at ten in the morning, and close at one, with a two hours' intermission.

There are no text-books. The inmates recline on divans, and Egyptian goddesses of private importation spray them with diluted knowledge, which they absorb under a patented and exclusive method. Under no circumstances are their brains allowed to act. An active brain in society makes trouble, and woe to the fashionable institute which dares stir up gray matter.

Notwithstanding John's self-hung millstones, he successfully practises law, and he really is a good legal adviser. In his office, John is more than half a man. His idiosyncrasies seldom become active till he crosses the line between Real Boston and its Back Bay Annex. On the Fenway, John's a fool, and he is n't lonesome.

One day, not so very long ago, I met brother John's wife in one of those "Art-in-Everything" stores, where things may not be what they seem, and where price is the appraiser of value.

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“I am so flustrated,” she lisped in her watery voice; “you know that Brookline-tina is studying Hebrew. That’s the proper dialect just now. The Hebrewians meet at our house every Tuesday. Yes, and we employ Stringer. You know Stringer! His lunches are just too exquisitely sweet for anything. Brooklinetina says that he’s the only caterer who has the Hebric temperament. To be sure, he does fix things up to a double *t*. Such taste! Brookline-tina says that he’s an artist, that the way he sets up the table is a poem in harmony. Each little cup and plate and viand make a picture in gastronomy.”

And this is John’s wife, — John, a Bostonian in all but birth, and a dweller on Boston’s filled-in Back Bay flats of exclusiveness. This is what four years in the University fitted him to select. But wait, did n’t John make a good trade for John? He wanted money. It was easier to marry it than to earn it. Perhaps an intelligent, lovable, helpful wife would n’t have given satisfaction. A good wife is not much good to the man who does n’t want what she brings him.

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We get what we are after much more often than we think we do, even if what we get is what we should n't have.

Speaking of the five of us, I said there were no two alike; and I told the truth. Not one of us had one single spot of similarity to the others, save that we all wore trousers.

Our family tree is a sort of shrub of grafts, too much intercut to know the species of its original stump.

Have n't I forgotten something, and is n't that something myself? Carelessness, not modesty, is to blame.

What about me? Let this be the beginning of my confession, that I may speak frankly about myself.

I 'm an editor.

Don't hitch away from me, and draw in your skirts if you're the kind that wears them. Think of me, not as I am, but as I may be; for some day, through the Providences of a kind Heaven, I may become a reformed journalist. For the sake of what I may be, have charity.

But I anticipate. Let my growth grow upon you in evolutionary stages.

FATHER'S practice enjoyed continuous enlargement; its growth was natural and not of the jumpy sort. He established a branch office in Orleans and another in Sandwich, with house sub-branches in between. So popular was he, and so efficient seemed to be his remedies, that people outside of Yarmouth actually regulated their sick spells to suit his convenience.

Virtually father controlled the sick-and-well situation. Wednesday was Sandwich's day to be sick, and on Saturdays only were Orleanites permitted to be ailing. Father always made a concession in favor of off-schedule births and accidents, which he allowed to occur not more than a day before or a day after his advertised journeys to his branch offices.

If father had collected half of what was due him, we would have been no richer, because what we had to eat and to wear did n't seem to be dependent upon his receipts. He spent all he received, whether it was much or very much, little or very little.

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My initiative school-days began at Yarmouth; but not at the public school. Oh, no! We belonged to the Tone, to the Upper Ten, Fifteen, Twenty, Twenty-five, Thirty, and so on, as you may choose to count it.

I went to private school.

The richest man on the Cape had two children, a boy and a girl. He established the "Selfer Institute for the Education of My Own." And I went there, I and a selected half-dozen Toners.

We had one teacher, and he taught everything, from baseball to writin'. We took turns bringing paper, pencils, pens, and ink. Our schoolroom was the parlor of a homestead of the building vintage of 1750.

It was a good school, a mighty good school. Sometimes, now, when I watch children studiously struggling under our refined modern system of education, I wish that they might sit at my ancient school bench, and have a chance, as I had, to get alongside the solid sense that my old teacher carried in regular stock, always ready for delivery.

When I was half-past-eight, father began to hear the Boston bee buzzing in his ear.

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He wanted to be a city curist, to have regular office hours, and a uniformed attendant to open and shut the door and tell people he was engaged. So we moved to Boston.

Father wanted to come, and mother did n't care. I protested. I took father to one side. I figuratively opened my shirt front that he might see my heart pulsate.

"Pa," I whimpered, "must we go?"

"Yes," he replied. Just a plain "yes," with no crochet to it, and snapped out — an unaccompanied and naked affirmative. Father seemed amused. He had a hidden sense of humor that periodically came out of hiding. It happened to be due.

"My son," said he, with the semblance of a twinkle in his eye, "why don't you want to go to Boston?"

"Pa," I said, in a voice that was as earnest as I knew how to make it, "I don't want to leave Mary."

Father took one long, lingering look at me. Then he walked to one of the windows. Evidently he did n't see what he wanted to, for he tried all the windows, staring a minute or two out of each.

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"Newson," he began. Then he seemed to choke; at any rate, he coughed repeatedly, as he walked around the room.

I followed him. I pulled at his hand. He shook me off, held me at arm's-length and gazed at me with a look that I felt go into me and through me. Then he actually laughed, — a big, hearty, vibrating, echoing laugh, — the first and last real laugh that I ever heard him give.

He took me on his lap. He was n't laughing then. Why did he wipe his glasses? I did n't know then, I don't now. I will never know until I ask him in the Land of Explanations; and perhaps he won't tell me then, for there are gems which glow only in the dark, — heart-string strains too muffled for listening ears. If I had been older then, mature enough to have read between his eyes, perhaps I'd have seen more of father than I ever had before or did afterwards.

Mary May and I had been engaged for six whole and complete weeks. She was seven and a half and I was a year older. We sat at the same desk and ate our lunches together. I called for her in the morning

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on the way to school and left her at her gate on the way home. Folks laughed at us, but we did n't care. Soberly we had announced our engagement, and gamely we stuck together, unabashed by the winks and titters of the old and young busy-bodies.

Mother knew about it, but she entered no protest. Mrs. May swapped her butter for mother's eggs, and one of mother's cousins had married a childhood's playmate.

Some years afterwards I smiled at the thought of it; but I don't smile now. We were children then, hardly more than babies, and we knew not what we were doing; yet that undefined and incomprehensible feeling which kept us together may have been an unsexed and impassionate whisper from one of the fore-sounds of the Commanding Voice of the Eternal Universe, — Love, the Motor-Heart of the Everlasting.

VI

FATHER bought a house in that tree-shaded and then water-less, sewer-less, and bathroom-less Hub-line section, alternately known as Boston Highlands and Roxbury. We lived on a street-car street, with two cars both ways each and every hour, and a theatre car as late as ten-thirty on Saturdays only.

Out went father's sign, and in came business.

Father was an instantaneous Boston success. Patients seemed to have been waiting for him. He was the proper filling of a recognized want. Queer, is n't it, that city folks so willingly forsake their true and tried family physicians to experiment with a new-comer?

You see father was the Great Cape Cod Curer.

Father did n't advertise it. Oh, no, he was a professional from his heels up — one of those ethical men who would rather starve within the Gates of the Regulars than eat pie on Sensation's Corner.

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But was n't he a Cape Codder? Had n't he cured his hundreds and his thousands? Was n't he something new for Boston? Had n't he cast his oil upon the radiating waters, and had n't the oily tide cleared the Cape to enter Boston?

He was; he had; he was; he had; it had.

Father was a success, a bigger success in Boston than in Yarmouth. Yarmouth folks were too practical. They lacked faddism, toadyism, lackeyism, and folly in general.

Father on the Cape was a doctor, only a doctor, and he was reckoned somewhere near to what he was worth; but in Boston, dear old, prehistoric, mossy, mouldy, crankified, cult-cultured Boston!—oh, what a difference! Here father was a genius. Here all his foibles and follies were but the effervescent overflow of ability's eccentricities.

But father was innocent all the while. The fool things he did,—and no genius ever was exempt from fool-doing,—he did without premeditation; either because he wanted to or did n't know any better, and without one thought of their commercial value. His peculiarities were natural, and

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in Boston, as on the Cape, he opened his mental doors and let his inside shine forth; and Boston applauded with that refined and subdued boisterousness which gets loose only under great provocation.

Father was a Boston IT. His practice was immense. If he could have attended to all who came to him, he would have cured or killed one a minute.

Our Boston residence was a big, rambling, gabled rookery, of the architecture of half a hundred years ago, a forebear of the Mansard roof epidemic. The whole front of the house was parlor, save the bay-windowed ell which father used for his office. Every room was too big, and there was enough hall space to hold another full-grown house.

For more than a year father's house was Roxbury's leading landmark of sanitary progression. Our sheathed and oil-clothed bathroom was celebrated for its lonesomeness. True, it was not so very much of an affair, anyway. It had n't any pipe water, but it had a real tin-lined bathtub and a faucetless washbowl; and, honor of honors, it was the only one on the street; and further-

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more, was open for business at all hours and on all days. In no sense was it a Saturday institution.

Here, under the cocked-hat roofs, I passed the years of my youthfulness and freshness.

The primary school first claimed me. How well I remember that boxed-up brick building, whose only angles were right angles, with its yard of brick and its brick walls, where we slipped in winter and baked in summer.

Perhaps it was because my father had a sudden stroke of fashionable aberration, and perhaps it was because I didn't keep up with my class or my class got ahead of me; however, I was dropped into a private school, situated on a swell private place, and presided over by two aged shadows of the wealth and reputation which had passed. Here I thought I studied, and here I learned nothing. I strutted to school and I strutted back again.

The books I had were different from the books the other boys carried. Everything about my school, whether for better or for worse, was not like what the city schools

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had or taught. I did n't then know that I was suffering from that most contagious of all fashionable diseases — exclusiveness.

But circumstances worked a cure. After a time, a new grammar school was opened in a big brick building, with a four-sided roof and a fire-alarm bell. I was one of the charter scholars, and here I stayed for a year or more. Then the Latin school claimed me for an inmate.

And where was Mary May, the fiancée of my infancy? She was in Yarmouth, running an educational race with me, and always a lap ahead.

We corresponded, — a letter a week each way. Somehow the contents were inclined to be sensible, little weekly bulletins of gossipless news, of items each of us thought the other would be interested in.

I went with the girls some, and with Mary's consent. I allowed her to go with the boys. But I did n't go with the girls then as much as I did later, because I did n't know how, and because I was Mary's "only own," and felt that my girl-going rights were limited.

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Yet I had a pretty good time, and did n't miss much of what seemed to want to come to me. Occasionally I kissed a girl according to the parlor game opportunities of those days.

Did I write Mary about it? Did I tell her all I did? Of course not. Even in my boyhood days discretion was the better part of Newson. I realized that the self-tell-tale was a fool and deserved his punishment. Young as I was, I had a few ounces of reasoning matter. My confessional boom-erang would have scarred me after it had bruised Mary. Her ignorance of my doings was good for her and a mighty big sight better for me.

From the Latin school I jumped into the high school; and like an ass, — the worst kind of an ass, — gave up my classical intentions and refused to enter college.

How I have since stormed at my youthful idiocy!

I could have been a collegian with a string of fraternity charms hanging from my chain, and with a mind broadened, trained, and strengthened by contact with that great edu-

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cational mill which never refuses to turn out real men if decent material is thrown into its hopper. Among the accumulating thousands of regrets I have, this is my one great regret; and if I should live to be a million, I should, each successive year, berate myself the harder for throwing away civilization's best heritage.

Without introduction, and without preparation, I entered the University of the World through its broadest door, and travelled along its hardest road.

I became a newspaper man, or a journalist, as you may please to title progression's greatest business-profession.

VII

IN the eighteen hundred and seventies, Boston was more of a town and less of a city than she is to-day. In those semi-old-fashioned times, Boston had a central hill-top-head, a neck, and arms and legs sticking out from a business body of New England conservative activity.

Boston was expanding. She was mothering suburban babies of her own, and looking for more. She had annexed blocks, and houses with yards, and cowless farms, and houseless fields, and barns, and hen-coops, without number. She didn't know it, but she was becoming Greater Boston.

But with all her big family, Boston was still a town, the biggest and the greatest country-city in Christendom. Her people turned in at nine, and only by special permit sat up a little later. Her theatres opened at half-past seven, with only one metropolitan enough to hoist its curtain at a quarter-before eight; but none of them, not even a hall-show, began so late as eight; and eleven o'clock saw Boston padlocked for the night.

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The Boston of those gas and lamp-light days had no knowledge of midnight. All lights went out at eleven, and Boston slept in a feather bed too soft to make one awaken till the eastern sun flashed the eyelids open.

Roxbury, the old city of Roxbury, was a country annex to a country city. Only a double dozen of her inhabitants lived in her two or three blocks; and all the rest of the people were in houses with yards, separated by intervening yards and fields with or without houses; and the long streets were shaded, and there were numerous avenues, and many alleys with entrances but no outlets, and always marked, "This is a private way. Dangerous passing."

In those days folks swapped calls and didn't wait for introductions, and they seemed to like each other. There were neighbors then. Every Roxbury anybody, whether rich or poor, or located somewhere in the middle, had a pew in church, and a seat at the Lyceum, which he attended with next-to-church regularity.

City life in this Boston-annex moved in four courses, — home, with its feather beds;

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school, with its blackboards; church, with its compulsory Sunday-school; and the Lyceum, with lectures held at stated periods and attended by all ages, all dispositions, and all conditions of respectability. Whether I would or not, I listened to discourses upon every conceivable subject, from woman's rights to political reformation, and from Egyptian art to geographical description.

In those primitive days of over a score and a half years ago, city journalism was but a step ahead of the country newspaper. The old cylinder press turned round and round in both places, the city plant beating the country press by a few more cylinders and feeders. The perfecting press was just beginning its existence, the stereotype was in its cradle, and the linotype had n't arisen in the furthest future-reaching dream. Hand-setting was the only setting done, and the freshly set type in its turtle-back chase came between bed and platen.

Boston supported seven daily more-or-less newspapers:

The *Proclaimer*, which had just shaken off the dust of sensation, clothed itself in the

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deep, thick broadcloth of journalistic dignity, and lodged in a brand new building of its own, with two floors of brain-boxes, two sets to a room, with tubes, bells, elevators, and higher salaries.

The *Earth* was a mighty frisky, lively, and never-still youngster, with circulation on the brain, a chronic disease which never left it. The *Earth* threw down the gauntlet, the *Proclaimer* picked it up; the others, the staid old papers, formed a ring, and the race for circulation was on to stay.

The *Ledger* was the legitimate Republican grandmother of all New England. It seldom smiled. It never laughed. It refused to make merry with its esteemed contemporaries. It was a journalistic journal, a recorder of fact, and a dispeller of fancy. It had twice as much bottom as top, and could n't topple over. Like the *Proclaimer* and the *Earth*, the *Ledger* came out both morning and evening, one edition in the morning, and a dozen or so in the evening, all hour-marked half a day ahead of issue.

The *Scriber*, printed with perfumed ink on ladies' cloth, and edited by ladies' men, was

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the most profitable example of petticoated journalism within the circle of the skirt-bound world. It was a magazine with tolerated news columns, a daily distributor of flannelled art, sterilized literature, and filtered music. It fairly radiated respectability. To read the *Scriber* was to be respectable, refined, literary, philanthropic, and Bostonese.

The *Publicitor*, a two-sheet poster folded crosswise, was a business-built bulletin interspersed with news, editorials, and other varieties, with reliability water-lined into its paper.

The *Stick*, a jolly, happy, smiling Democratic newspaper, laughed at defeat, heartily slapped the victorious Republican on the back, and seemed to equally enjoy losing and winning.

The *Wanderer*, Boston's big blanket sheet and expounder of seriousness, was of the size of a window-curtain, and entirely unmanageable on a breezy day. It was conservative, of high moralistic principles, and it never stepped without its staked-out lines. Within its field it was respected and beloved. The children and grandchildren of its original subscriber

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read it with conviction, and solemnly filed it away with the sacred Almanac.

The *Wanderer* was the only daily paper which Cape Cod custom would permit to cross its frontier. Every Cape Cod family was assessed its subscription price, and had to have it anyway. In its garrety editorial loft, I spun my first web of ink.

Indeed, it was a quaint old place, this pasty and inky *Wanderer* rookery, with its bare floors, its tenty ceilings, and its box-stalls, where editors with pens and reporters with pencils sometimes thought as they wrote, but wrote, wrote, wrote.

On the same floor with the editors, a hundred compositors, with tan-colored hands, set the copper-faced type, from seven in the morning till six in the afternoon; and away down below the street, a big press, with six cylinders and six feeders, an engineer, and another fellow, turned out one side of six papers at each revolution.

My first job, — later I did only assignments, — was to report the proceedings of the two hundredth annual meeting of the Prehistoric Dames.

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Their castlette was located halfway up the Beacon Street hill, in one of those bowed-out-front, otherwise unrelieved houses, with the contents of front parlor, back parlor, angular hall, one-turn stairway, basement dining-room and kitchen; four bedrooms to a floor for three floors, save one, where a tin tub in a wooden frame was open for inspection on Saturdays only.

I rang the bell. Some uniform looked at me. I boldly said:

“I’m the representative of the *Wanderer*.”
(It was six months before I got near enough to earth to call myself a reporter.)

The lackey’s automatic finger on his automatic arm pointed to an open door.

I entered.

The room was half filled with exclusively exclusive women of assorted ages and sizes. To be a Dame, one must have descended from Something; I forget what, but I am sure it was from Something, and that this particular Something must have been a Something of some particular sort. At any rate, there were only five hundred and sixty-six and one half genuine Dames. The half

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Dame was on the waiting list, there to remain until her proofs of descent alleged to be due arrived and were properly tagged by the Official Weigher of Ancestral Weights and Measures. All other Dames were spurious, and did n't have in them the essential Something which Somebody put there centuries ago.

Miss Annis Amquaint presided. She lived on a farm in the shrubbery section of chilly Brookline; and there, with a neighbor half a mile to the right of her, another a quarter of a mile to the left of her, two a mile in front of her, and three others three quarters of a mile behind her, she fed on pedigreed meat and home-cured pork.

The Secretary, Mrs. Ben Broad, occupied two chairs. There was nothing artificial about her size. She was one of those over-fed and over-groomed bundles of fatty laziness always inhabiting the stock-yards of society.

The other ladies, — for there were no mere women present, — truly represented Old Boston, Boston as she had been, to some extent was, and to a less extent always will be. Some



The room was half filled with exclusively exclusive women.

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of the members had money, some of them had n't, but they were all Descendants.

Not one of them had any record of personal attainment; not one of them had ever done anything herself, or much of anything in connection with others; each one was a representative of a Something, of an alleged Had-Been-Much-Sometime.

There were essays on several useless subjects, all devoid of instruction, and positively interesting to nobody; each one written by some member, each one strictly self-made.

When a man does n't know how to write, he may hire it done; but a woman, never! When she would write, she writes. Making hay in the rain is easy compared with tripping up the pen of a want-to-write woman.

I had been told that Beacon Hill Tone shunned publicity and never wanted to see itself in print, so I did n't shorthand much of the stuff, — just abstracted it, a paragraph or two of each. I know better now. Experience was just pouring into me.

Don't like to see themselves in print? Jumping bodkins! What they say and what they want are separated by an ocean-wide

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gulf of difference. Each one of them handed me her manuscript, and I printed it all, every word of it, for the *Wanderer* carried the type of all fadaties, and could set anything. True, the *Wanderer's* constituency could n't understand half of what was said; neither did the writers, nor did anybody; but Boston folks liked it, revelled in it, clipped it, and went to sleep over it.

Oh, but the Dames had n't cornered Boston's supply of ancestral toadyism! Boston was full of it, running over with it. Poke a hole anywhere, and you could see it gush.

VIII

FOR a whole year I travelled for the *Wanderer*; went everywhere, from Lowell on the north to Middleboro on the south, from Worcester on the west to Down the Harbor on the east.

One day I reported a Sunday-school convention; on the morrow, a Masonic ball; straightened out a railroad tangle on the next day; and wrote up a wedding on the day after. I went from high to low, and from low to high. I did everything, from a two-liner to a full-pager.

Because I did n't allow ignorance to stand in my way, I was given assignments worthy of twice my age.

My desk abutted that of the dramatic and musical editor. How I envied that man! He had curls, hair on his face, glasses, and a "plug" hat. I was minus them all. He fairly clothed himself in free tickets. They stuck out all over him, — tickets to everything, from the opera to the circus.

I began by saying "Good-morning" to him. He returned it at the start. Then I

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gave him the cigars I could n't smoke. Day by day, word by word, cigar by cigar, I made him notice me; and I got tickets, — bushels of them. In six months I was his assistant. Assistant dramatic and musical editor, with the supreme right to write for tickets! My cup was full and spilling over. If there was anything else I wanted then, I did n't know it; I was teetotally satisfied.

But I was still a reporter, and followed “events” as before. Most of the time I “did” the society parts, — receptions, visitations, ministers' meetings, lectures, and other “tame” things, — the harmless affairs that were never heated in sensation's pot, the kind of stuff our city editor dubbed “slush.”

But I could write it. When under fire, I fairly sweat adjectives. I was a marksman at taffy-throwing. Our leading reporter, in telling my chum about me, sarcastically remarked that my reports even pleased the dead, and that frequently the deceased asked permission to return to earth long enough to thank me for bestrewing his memory with the flowers of tact, and incidentally for spelling his name correctly.

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The "big fellows" did n't like me at first, because the "powers" did. But in a month I had cleared the channel and was sailing harmoniously with the rest of the craft. When anybody abused me I did him a favor, and he returned it; then we were friends. When I knew I did n't have an exclusive piece of news, and was sure that my fellow scribes would get it anyway, I shared it with them. It did n't cost me an extra effort, and it saved their time. When I had something which I knew nobody else was likely to get, — well, I kept out of the way.

As I was the only reporter in my vicinity, I was a big man about Roxbury.

Father's patients were pretty nearly all rich, and most of them were swimming on the top wave of society. This gave us standing, the kind of standing which allowed no door to remain closed before it.

Old Hardy Sole was the financial proprietor of his church. He was bigger than the minister, bigger than all the deacons, and was nearly three quarters of the whole thing. As he paid the bills, he controlled the votes. He was a pretty decent sort of a fellow, as

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square as a legal brick, and he had the energy, the push, the persistency, and stick-to-it-iveness to win on any field of obstacles. In business he commanded his partners. They danced when he pulled the string. In church matters he controlled his constituents. I call them that out of courteous pity. He condescendingly allowed the society to vote, but he considered the vote informal; and so it was, for his affirmatives and negatives were sufficient to make or break an action.

Hardy Sole was a man of metal. His will was iron; and his cheek — well, he used metal polish instead of soap on his face. As he willed, so went his business, and so went his church.

I was librarian of the Sunday-school, but I was n't responsible for the books I distributed, nor did I realize the harm I was doing by being the agent for the circulation of an unmanly and unreal literature, the kind that softens the reader's brains and tries to twist the backbone of religion into a spiral of contortion.

The church burnt down. It was insured. Hardy Sole was the building committee,

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although he held only the title of chairman. I wanted glass-covered shelves with locks for the new books.

"Newson," said he, "I'm having a tough job to rebuild the church with the insurance money, and there ain't going to be no frills."

I confided in the city editor.

"My boy," said he, "why don't you write up Old Sole?"

I did. I told who he was. I said that sixty thousand dollars and Hardy Sole Esquire were building a seventy-five thousand dollar edifice. I said lots of things, and most of them were true.

The following Sunday, Mr. Hardy Sole met me in the vestibule. He shook his fist in my face.

"Newson New!" he exclaimed, "if you ever write anything about me again, I'll cowhide you!"

I collapsed. The next day I told the city editor, and I feebly blamed him for getting me into the scrape.

"Newson, you poor little innocent," said he, "do you want me to tell you what to do next?"

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"I wish you would," I replied. "I don't know how I am going to stand it, with Hardy Sole against me."

"Write him up again!"

"What!"

"Do as I say. Write him up, and plaster the taffy on thicker than you did in the first place."

I did it. With fear and trembling I entered church on the following Sunday. Mr. Hardy Sole was there. Before I had a chance to dodge him he had patted me on the shoulder, and I heard him say:

"I read what you wrote, Newson. Well, reporters have got to have something to write about, anyway. I've been thinking about them glass windows for the library, and I guess I can squeeze out 'nough insurance money to cover the job."

And he did. The Sunday-school library room was the best fitted, and the most commodious, of any in or about Boston.

Since then I've handled things somewhat as I handled Hardy Sole, and once in a while it has n't worked; but generally it has. Human nature is human nature, and we're

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all conceited, yes, every one of us, the very good, the good, and the bad alike, save in proportion; and there's a similarity to us all, be we much, or less, or mighty little; and there is n't one of us who does n't like to see himself in print, if what's in print speaks well of him. He may say he does n't, and he may even think he does n't. But he lies. Oh, how he lies!

IX

ABOUT this time father suggested that I "chip into the home hat." Five dollars a week, less car-fare and lunches, did n't encourage contribution. I changed my base from pen-and-ink glory to a paper making a specialty of its pay-roll.

The *Commercial Poster*, my second business father, was a great paper, great in everything, not barring self-respect. It was a weekly blackboard of commercial news, from rag-pickers' prices to Government bonds.

On the *Commercial Poster* I began as regular collector, special solicitor, and occasional reporter. From nine to five o'clock I walked and talked.

I became a Boston street pilot, and knew how to navigate her roads and channels better by instinct than by chart. I was familiar with the nearest course between two ports, the alleys, and the under-passage-ways.

In my way I was a success. If a man had money I got it; if he did n't have money I got his promise. Once in a while I landed an advertisement, and there was great re-

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joining in the *Poster* office, for to its proprietor the getting of a new advertisement was next to godliness.

I made a record; the *Poster* raised my pay; two other papers wanted me; I auctioned myself off to the highest bidder — the old *Wanderer*.

I went back with my head on the tip-top of me, my legs straight, my body erect, and my face radiating a smile of get-there-ness. The gray-haired manager welcomed me with a cordial grasp of the hand.

“You’re on the staff,” said he, “with no regular duties. You’re to knock ’round, write what occurs to you, help out the regulars when they’re crowded; but you’re your own boss, and the pay is twenty dollars net, expenses paid by the *Wanderer*.”

I was manager of myself, to do what I pleased so long as what I pleased to do did n’t displease the publisher.

A better berth could n’t have been built to order. I swallowed experience in choking mouthfuls. In a year I learned more than any other position could have taught me in five. I began to be a man before my time.

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Only a boy, I was a seasoned newspaper man, with a knowledge — spread thinly, perhaps — broad enough to box the journalistic compass, and to travel with reasonable safety from pole to pole. Responsibility fattened me, and hard work gave me muscle.

Of course I was conceited. Why not? Isn't conceit a part of success? The conceitless man is afraid of his own self-respect, and either gives it away or hides it.

I recall Sammy Slump, a boyhood acquaintance. Sammy was entirely out of self-respect and self-conceit. He rendered himself unto others, taking no thought of himself. He gave and kept not, and as he kept nothing, nothing grew upon him. All he had, and all he was, he dispersed, and the quicker he got rid of what he had, the better it satisfied him. He humbled himself before himself, and apologized to himself for the existence of himself. He screened his mirror, that it might but dimly reflect his unworthiness. Sam never learned that man's first duty to man is to be a man himself, and that no one can give what he does not receive. When we give all we have, there is nothing

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left for us to do. Unless we retain the material nest-egg, we will no longer produce, and we will be but useless derelicts — floating menaces in the water-ways of progress. We should share what we have with others, not give others all that we have. He who does n't possess self-respect, with its accompanying self-conceit, will never do anything for anybody, because he will have no tools to make anything with. His anæmic self will run at his shadow and tremble at the sound of his sigh. Senseless generosity produces bankruptcy. The bankrupt is incompetent to give or take. If you don't learn to have before you give, you 'll never have anything worth while to give.

Conceit is essential to rapid advancement — not over-conceit, but conceit in reasonable volume. The conceit of youth becomes the assurance of old age. If you 're master of your conceit, you have back of you a slave of unlimited assistance. If conceit is your master, you 're doomed to failure.

But don't cultivate self-conceit. It's a lusty plant. Give it half a chance and it will outgrow your self-respect.

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I had conceit, — just the right amount of it to make me do instead of hesitate, to boost me over the places in which self-respect might not have been aggressive enough or quick enough to aid me. My conceit, happily mixed with enough self-respect and experience to work it, and to be worked by it, rubbed failure from my vocabulary, and kept me in the front rank of active endeavor.

Dear old conceit, the friend of my youth, why have you forsaken me? But has he? My friends say he has n't, and my enemies say I house him still.

Don't let this little interjected sermon comfort you, you misers of money and men of abnormal wealth. I was referring to the getting and giving of a currency passable where your money refuses to multiply. You, you getter and keeper of golden cash, are too miserably poor for the Almshouse of Time to shelter.

X

I AM mighty glad that I was born when I was. If I had arrived later I should have missed a lot.

The date of my birth was opportune; it gave me the chance to see conventionalism at the apex of inglorious power, for before my day there were no conventions for the propagation of convention, and conventionalism wore no crown and carried no sword.

But her eminence was short-lived. Hardly had she seated herself upon her transient throne, and felt that she was mistress of the New World, with headquarters at Boston, when her subjects rebelled, and part of them joined progression's army and the war of brains against marrow was called to stay.

I antedated the beginning of this great fight. I was old enough to hear when its first cannon roared. Enterprise was gradually occupying the territory of its enemy.

New Boston turned against Old Boston. New ideas rose in a night, and triumphantly marched by the sleeping homes of the unburied inhabitants, with horns blowing and

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lights flashing. The occupants awoke long enough to heave a sigh at their intruders, pull down their blinds, and then to crawl back in between their musty feather beds to dream the same old dream that their fathers dreamed before them.

Modern progress and I seemed to become of age together.

I was twenty-one, a man in years, a man by law. I had a clear title to myself, owned without encumbrance the watch my father gave me, had assumed management of my dog, and felt that my pay was all my own, the future in my keeping, myself the partner of myself, to think as I would, do as I wished, and succeed if I had in me the stuff of which success is made.

That I may some day know half as much as I then thought I knew is the superlative height of my present ambition. Thought could n't think for more, tongue could n't ask an increase. I had never walked; I had always run; now I raced, — raced with the world, and raced with myself.

Blessed Conceit; thrice blessed Ignorance! Without you both I should have stumbled

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and fallen. You together pushed me and supported me; you bound my eyes that I might not see the edge I was walking on; you aerated my brain with the gas of painlessness, that I might not feel the wear and tear of my journey, and should not know when I bumped against the pricks of trade; you filled my ears with oil, to lessen the rattle of disaster.

I plunged ahead and won; won, because not knowing defeat, I was n't afraid of him. If I met him on the road, I knew not what he was, and knew not his power, and I rushed at him, and cut and slashed my way through him, magnifying my own strength, hurling myself through everything, dismayed at nothing, a rushing, burning, ever-moving lump of young ambition, fired with youthful fearlessness. But I was n't naked of sense. There was Cape Cod sand in my crop. My conceit was my energy, my ignorance my courage, and my sense steered.

Boston never appealed to me. Sometimes I felt more like a squatter than a settler. Bostonians were too contented, too self-satisfied, too superior to all the rest of the

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world, Cambridge excepted. There seemed to be more veneer than solid wood. Society was a Babel, each bunch of it with its own dear language, each lot of it a peculiar brand all its own sweet own.

I wanted air, God's air; I wanted to get out from the stifling musk of exclusiveness into the boisterous winds of unconfined out-of-doors. I wanted to be free, to be able to untie my tongue and let it spin. There must be other worlds besides Boston, not of the same order, not bearing the genuine trademark, but good of their kind, and different, very different, from the Hub of Self-Esteem.

I would leave Boston; I would plough a new field and raise a rougher harvest; I would go where myself, by itself, of itself, and for itself, stood for itself, and amounted to all that itself could get and hold. I would be a good-sized man, with other good-sized men, in some independent spot where men are reckoned for what they are, not for what their fathers, and their grandfathers, and their great-grandfathers, and their several times great-grandfathers had been, might

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have been, but very likely were n't what it was said they were.

I would try a country city; not a country city like Boston, but one smaller, more removed from other cities, populated by out-of-door people, workers and not shirkers, self-respecting folks who sleep when they sleep, — don't oversleep, — and work when they work.

Mary May was presumably still mine. Nothing like me as yet had peeped above her horizon. Perhaps she would have considered an improvement, had it crossed her path and stayed in her way long enough for her to examine it.

I still loved Mary, not because I had n't seen others, for I had, and their number was legion. In my travels, I had passed between many a row of samples; and the girls liked me, perhaps not altogether for myself alone. A pocket-book of fair thickness, always with some money and many free tickets in it, has unhidden charms, which have their reward in quantity if not in quality of girls.

I was n't a handsome man, not half so much worth looking at as many another fellow

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of my set, but I had free tickets, and enough of them, to offset a face and figure ever so much unfairer to look upon.

Mary loved me, at least she continued to so inform me with tri-weekly regularity. I loved her because of my experience with others, because I had compared her with others to her advantage. She loved me because she knew no others. I was the fixed star in her firmament, and all the other stars, no matter how much greater may have been their magnitude, did their twinkling too far away from her point of vision for her to realize their brilliancy.

We were formally engaged. From the ring she wore sparkled the happy evidence. Every other month she was at my house, and every alternate month I spent a few days in Yarmouth with her folks.

Our love had never been a trembling stream, hiding its face behind the shadowy rocks and shady trees. From the start there had been an openness to it, a frankness and a strenuosity, which allowed our sense to exercise a third interest in the copartnership.

When I first broached the subject of my

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proposed change of base to Mary, she did n't sob and sigh and hysterically tell me that an increased separating distance would blanket her sun and change her flowers to mourning weeds. The sense she had of her own, coupled with the ancestral sense of bygone ages, came to her aid, and she willingly sacrificed some of the comfort of the present for the prospect of a more comfortable future.

But don't think she did n't feel and realize the greater distance. She did. With her arms about my neck, her cheek close to mine, she sweetly gave her consent and blessing.

And do not think that Mary and I did our love making by geometrical rule. We did n't. Some of the same old way was our way, as it had been the way of the millions who came before us and will be the way of the billions who come after us.

Sometimes, when I listen to the love stories of other people, and hear them tell of what they did in their courting days, I smile with satisfaction as I recall my experiences. Mary and I exhausted all the curls and curly-cues of the common way and introduced

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many an innovation of our own. Perhaps some day I will write a sentimental guide, and in it I'll furnish rules and diagrams.

I remember it all now, or most of it, and it does n't bring the thinnest shadow of a blush. Why? I'll tell you. I'm still doing it, and when the day comes that I don't care for it any more, I'll jump overboard and ask the ocean's pardon for taking advantage of its open generosity.

Westward my star was beckoning, but not very far west, only to Muchtown, — Muchtown, Iam County, the commercial centre of Massachusetts' Far West. There I expected to find more of what I wanted and less of what I did n't want — to discover Ideal's camping-ground.

Alas, ignorance played me her meanest trick! I knew not then that conservatism, and all the things and nothings that conservatism stands for, have more than one spawning-place.

XI

MUCHTOWN was Massachusetts' western centre of commercialism and conceit.

According to her bankers and druggists, Muchtown's population was bumping the twenty thousand line; but take a Northville man's word for it, and there were scarcely fourteen thousand males and females, including the alleged aristocrats who inhabited the sacred sections of Pink and Blue streets, and lived on the reputations which had passed.

Muchtown was beautiful. Nature in her happiest mood dedicated to man a few square miles of flat fertility, and sentinelled them with round-topped hills, that man might conveniently sow and harvest, build his shelters, and live in an atmosphere reeking in healthfulness.

I inspected Muchtown from one of her guardian hills. Never had the earth seemed fairer than it did on that beautiful June morning. The sun was just peeping from behind a wooded mountain. The light, divided by the numerous branches of the

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trees, threw itself across the valley in scattered rays, making the dew-bespattered leaves and the just opening flowers sparkle in crystalline coloring. A little winding mountain stream darted from beneath rocks and over shining beds of stone-dotted sand, forcing its way, first toward me, then away, then back again, and rivalling the chameleon in its changing colors. At one point it was quivering and bending in a thread of burnished silver, at another it shone like hammered gold. How it jumped and capered, as though enjoying its first holiday, and bound to make the most of it.

Before me spread a landscape which easily defied the artist's brush. For miles there stretched valley, hill, and mountain: here, a farmhouse, with its long, dark roof, its weather-beaten sides, its little bunched up garden of flowers, its big barn, its old well; and beyond it, the fields, which would soon wave with yellow grain; there, the white steeple of a church pointing Heavenward, as do the mountain tops, in silent worship of the One who made the hill and the valley, and covered all with nature's handiwork. In

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the distance I could see the faint, curling smoke of my new home, — Muchtown, with its big brick factories, and its white houses and cluster of churches, all lighted by the freshness of the rising sun. I looked down upon this little world of life and labor, and I could see its people, like so many Lilliputians, moving as in a camera. I heard the soft murmur of a mountain waterfall, and saw its waters caper in the mellow light. I was as if lifted above the world, while the choicest vale of earth lay beneath me. New things seemed to come from every side, for all seemed new. Night had just lifted her curtain, revealing a land freshly washed in nature's fountain and sparkling in the morning of a fresh existence. I took off my hat to God, and to God's nature. To have remained covered would have been sacrilege.

Just a little below me was a farmhouse, one of those old-fashioned, weather-beaten, ready-to-tumble-down habitations, which had withstood the wind and rain and snow of a century, and had been apparently tumbling down for a score of years, with a prospect

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of continuing to tumble for two score more. In the front yard was a well, with a perfect model of the old oaken bucket dangling at the end of a pole, for half the length of which the moss had almost as good a resting-place as about the sides of the bucket itself. At one side of the house were the barns, — immense structures, without a right-angled joint in any of them. The fields, which extended from just behind the buildings to the base of the mountain, were dotted with a young generation of plants or covered with a growth of grass and clover.

I was thirsty, and the sight of the well-curb promised that somewhere beneath there must be a spring of clear, cold water. I entered the yard just as a middle-aged man, who looked older than he was, appeared with a yoke of oxen, a drag, and a big dinner-pail. I lifted my hat, and said politely,

“Good-morning. May I have a drink?”

“I ain’t got no o’jection,” he replied. Then, coming closer to me, he asked, in true Yankee style,

“Who be yer?”

“I’m Mr. New, from Boston.”

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“ Ever been here 'bouts afore? ”

“ No.”

“ Goin' tu stay long? ”

“ I hope so.”

“ Be yer related tu the cider-mill News? ”

“ No.”

“ Any relation to the Tolton News? ”

“ I think not.”

“ Got any relations anywhere 'bout? ”

“ So far as I know, I have not.”

“ Then, what in thunder did yer cum here fur? ”

By this time, I had had my drink, and as I did n't propose to tell my business too much in advance of its consummation, I said, “ Thank you,” as I moved away.

“ Say!” he called out, “ was yer mother one o' them News which moved over t' other side of the mountain, and comed from some place near Bosting? ”

“ No!” I shouted back in answer.

On every side was the harmony of nature, without a marring contrast. The very air was peaceful, the frolicking sunbeams smiled a welcome. Then I judged Muchtown, not by her people, but by the nature-made part

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of her. In my youthful experience, I saw the picture by its surface and did n't look beneath its lines of light and shadow. I did n't, I could n't, realize, in those days of my immaturity, that man, not nature, makes a town, and that the great marvels in nature's foundry are subordinate to the mind of mighty man, earth's agent of the Almighty.

Beautiful, marvellously beautiful Muchtown, with a God-made beauty too sublime for man to mutilate. There may be other towns, framed with nobler scenery, more floral, and more grandly picturesque; but there are none more comfortably beautiful or more naturally constructed for man's home-making.

Muchtown is unfortunate. She 's in Massachusetts, and she does n't want to be. She 's not in New York, and she wants mightily to be. But she compromises. She lets her tillers of the soil remain puritanically plain, unrebored Bay Staters; but the people who drive tandem, and drive abreast, and who walk in the gloaming among her umbrella trees, who board at her hotels, who are of that indescribable and yet always try-

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ing-to-be-described class called "summer" people, are New Yorkers — flat-dwellers — ninety-nine and ninety-nine one hundredths per cent of them. And these people, these half-breeds of the metropolis, combine with Muchtown's Blue Bloods and dictate her policy, — a handful controlling a hatful.

Politically, Muchtown was too large for a town and too small for a city. The comforts of the one and the possibilities of the other refused to fraternize; and Muchtown grew on, — a divided dwelling-place, always striving to properly locate herself, and never doing it; yet satisfied in her conceit, and unwilling to swap herself for any of the towns then citified.

The town was filled with views and air, and there was plenty of each, with comfortable houses, all with yards and some with fences; irregular blocks, with no two of the same size or height or inward or outward appearance; with shaded streets; well-kept food and "eye" gardens; competing stores; and a reasonable amount of about everything else, including the widest and deepest sewer of society in all creation.

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Muchtown had self-elected herself the nesting-ground of the strongest and deepest-colored aristocracy that the dye-pots of society could stain. Before her roped-off exclusiveness Boston's Blue Blood paled, and New York's Four Hundred courtesied. Even London's society, in all its poppy-cockney, had no inner world so far in as Muchtown's innerness.

What matter if some of the swelldomers were Forty-niners, or had jumped their bail in distant cities? What if some of them had n't read beyond the primer's title-page, and thought Shakespeare wrote "London Assurance," and that Boucicault was the Poet Laureate of their motherland? Every one of them was crested-in-oil, and had a boughten title to a coat-of-arms medallion, and a family-record-in-type; and every one had money, whether or not he had anything else.

Where did they get it? Let the long-stilled echo of the past answer, if it will; but it won't.

Muchtown's Tone lived in big houses with yards. Their horses were of better breeding

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than themselves, and their servants would have been more at home in the parlors than were some of their enamelled mistresses. The few who knew enough to ride astride were horsemen and horsewomen, but most of them rode in carriages, and in open carriages, too.

The ladies gave teas in the prevailing color, and classical musicals where the misunderstood music was appreciated for what it was not intended to be.

But every one of the Tone, both male and female, whatever their feudal differences, had three common clearing-houses, — their membership in the Tuesday Morning Club, their right to contribute to the Lonesome Art Exhibit, and their privilege to be patrons or patronesses of the Home-Made-Hospital.

Between the metallic Tone on the one side, and the over-store dwellers on the other — folks too poor to have houses and yards of their own — came the real Muchtown, the brainy lawyers, the skilful doctors, the progressive store-keepers, the enterprising farmers, the well fixed ex-farmers, the ambitious clerks, the people who in intelligence and sense outweighed the self-styled aris-

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tocrats hundreds to one. And yet many of these people with brains, these living actors on Muchtown's every-day stage, aped the shadowy doings of Muchtown's Black Bloods, and danced like puppets to the twang of Tone.

Why? Nobody knows. Did they have to? Certainly not. Muchtown numbered her common people by thousands, her self-appointed aristocrats by dozens; yet these few patent-leather shiners, mentally spavined, and hardly more than quarter-witted, were by the people grouped and pedestalled, and before them Sense lost its savor and sat in the dust.

Why? Read the answer almost anywhere; for almost anywhere you will find that the Nonsense of Style is temporarily victorious over the Soundness of Sense.

The soda water of society is measured by its foam.

XII

MUCHTOWN was n't a literary centre; it was n't an educational centre; it was n't an art centre; it was n't a centre of anything save of its county, its business, its self-satisfaction, and its home-made brand of artificial society.

But in the hollow of the minds of some of the people, Muchtown was paved with literary moss, saturated with learning, laden with art, and entirely surrounded with mountains of history. Within its hill-lined borders, lying rumor claimed everything from literary grist-mills to art-foundries.

I lived there two years, and the only great author I ever saw jumped from his train to grab a depot-dipper of water, and the only canvas ever hung there rested upon the poles of the "Greatest Show on Earth." Perhaps a few men of letters had mailed their letters at the Muchtown post-office, but nothing more. Tradition says that a great poet once sat upon a Muchtown staircase, and there, in the old-fashioned front hall gloom, let an old clock tick his rhyme and

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rhythm. The old clock is there; it's everywhere; I've seen fifty of it, fifty originals and onlies; yes, I've seen them make them to sell to the city-shrewd summer boarders who are no match for country smartness.

But the appearance of literature and art sprouted and budded, and grew like hot-house mustard seeds. Every old maid, single or married, wrote at the magazines. The manuscript production of Muchtown doubled the postal exports and imports and increased the postmaster's salary. Sack after sack of words which refused to scorch, and of lines too soft to sit up alone, were despatched daily, to return with no whit of their weight diminished. They circled from Muchtown to New York and Boston and back to Muchtown, and finally landed in the *County Bird's* editorial garret.

The *Bird* took all that it could hold, without reading or editing any of it. The rest of it awaited its turn, and most of it is still on the waiting list.

The Lonesome Art Exhibition was the society event of the year. In a hall over two meat-markets were annually presented the

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rag and tag of Muchtown's frame-bound "oils," few of which resembled even art's poor relations. Here, for six nights and five afternoons, Muchtown's art-mongers and "literachewers" marched and counter-marched, that half of each arm-locked couple might show the skirted half of the other couples what she had of clothes. Like so many automatons, the men joined in the procession and strained their cross-grained intellects in heroic endeavors to discover what it was all about.

No country-city on this vast earth had so much of the make-believe of literature, art, science, history, and other educational things as Muchtown had, with so little collateral. So long as she could fool herself into thinking she was what she wanted to be, she did n't worry about what she really was n't. Muchtown's folly was her narcotic, and she slept the peaceful sleep of self-attained ignorance.

Muchtown was a big business centre, — there's no discounting that. Her well-kept stores supplied miles upon miles of storeless districts. The people, as a rule, bought their meat and pins at the local stores, and

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their dresses, furniture, other fixings, and high-art rum, in New York and Boston, Springfield and Albany, often paying a premium for out-of-town purchases.

But Muchtown's suburbs were faithful to her, and Muchtown did a big business, blanketed only on the north by Northville, on the east by Springfield, on the west by Albany, and on the south by nothing save New York itself.

The business street, christened Main Street, because it was that, had a semi-metropolitan appearance. Barring a church, both sides of the street from the Park to the bridge were lined with continuous blocks of plain and painted brick. One or two of the stores had upstairs to them, but most of the second floors were filled with offices with stoves, or were used as tenements for people who could n't afford whole houses. Main Street's mud discounted all other mud; it was more than real mud, black, sticky, and deep, so deep that it's a wonder many a child was n't drowned in it. People crossed at the several fords, which had flagstones underneath, way down below the sight of man.

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Muchtown had a half-dozen wholesale houses, but most of the stores were retail affairs, and there was n't a real department store among them. Each merchant stuck to his last; he did n't branch out beyond his regular lines. The shoe stores sold shoes, the dry-goods stores kept dry-goods, and some of the coal houses would n't sell wood.

In a business way Muchtown had a place for everything, and each thing was in its place. Her suburban trade did n't wander. Her merchants were as progressive and as enterprising as circumstances permitted. As a rule, they neither cut each other nor their prices. They were a pretty square sort of men, each to some extent attending to his own business, and permitting others to do likewise. But there was no real business fraternity. The tradesmen knew each other, and their families swapped calls; but the business men did n't get together, did n't organize, did n't have any live club or association, and the Board of Trade was a farce.

Muchtown truly lacked fraternity. Its society was cliquish, its business was homogeneous only in so far as it stayed on the

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same street, the Muchtown pastor preached from his own pulpit and confined his exchanges to other towns; there were few clubs and societies, and mighty little of anything which brings people together and helps to propagate the Brotherhood of Man.

But Muchtown was satisfied with herself, and too self-contained and too lazy, and too altogether self-conceited to become ambitious, where the noise of ambition disturbed her dozing conventionality.

XIII

MUCHTOWN was a church town; mind you, I don't say Christian town. Every resident went to church. Not to go was to lose caste here below. There were many churches of many kinds, all denominational headquarters, some rich in money, some financially poor, some wealthy in doing and in trying to do.

The Great Us Church meeting-house was a big hollow pile of red brick and cold stone, with shadowy windows, a high pulpit at one end, and slanting-back regulation pews, all facing one way — an orthodox ice-box, where the sins of its congregation were kept in refrigeration. Here a seven-thousand-dollar minister ministered to his constituents, and occasionally assured the Lord, in behalf of his central pew-holders, that the congregation continued, with some unanimity, to acknowledge a Power greater than Itself.

Not far away was a little low building, the Sunday home of the highest church in Muchtown, save one, whose congregation was satisfied to number as its own the money

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its wealthy neighbor condescendingly permitted to worship with it.

Cat-a-cornered across the street, the white steeple of the White Church pointed Heavenward, and within its walls a warm-hearted man, with a sun for a soul, preached a glowing religion.

Here a pulpit Christian faced a Christian audience, not a set of rigid pew-prayers, but men and women who carried the Golden Rule with them and did n't wrap it in asbestos and store it in a Sunday vault. The White Church was a church, a church too Christian to be denominational, and it would n't have been denominational if denominationalism had n't in those days been a man-appointed annex to the Trinity.

There were two other large meeting-houses, one on the main street betwixt the stores, where an active-brained preacher presented his convictions, afraid neither of denominational fire nor of water, a man as well as a minister, a fearless man, a man in the full bloom of his manly strength, a giant in Muchtown, with an energy far and beyond the water-power of his church.

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Down a side-street, the strenuous religionists filled the big auditorium, where people could see and hear, read their hymns in the bright light of out-of-doors, unscreened and unblanketed by lead-lined angels too anæmic to represent the helpfulness and strengthfulness of religion.

Its pastor, a quiet, well-read man, preached to a responsive people, and did more good than showed on the records.

In a little pinched-up building, on a way-back street, the moneyless Christians were permitted to worship the same God who is alleged to especially attend the Sunday sessions of the Self-Selected. Over this mission church presided the Head-Christian and best expounder of Christianity in Muchtown.

The shepherd of this unsocietyfied flock was the mental and moral superior of the Muchtown folks who patronized him. He was all man. Not an ounce of him fawned, or toadied, or cringed before the Golden Dollar. He stood upon his own feet, with his body straightened to its majestic height, and lived the Christianity he preached about. I can see him now, dear old Parson Goode,

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with basket in hand, carrying his food from store to home, a prince among the men who knew him not, because their littleness could not see his greatness. Some of the high-collared preachers and long-coated bishops, his superiors on earth, may in the Great By and By sweep the aisles and dust the seats of the Great Church of Above, where this good man, shining in the light of God-given love, with a sacrifice-earned crown of many jewels upon his head, will conduct the Grand Orchestra of Eternal Hallelujah, and those who knew him not on earth will gladly play second fiddle under his leadership.

Beautiful Muchtown, beautiful in what God made, the mother-town of the hills, the business oasis in the forest grandeur of mount and valley; Muchtown, my adopted home, the birth-place of my independence, — from your towering hills the rocks of experience fell upon me and remoulded me into a full-fledged man.

XIV

I WAS only a just-passed boy in years, but a man in experience, and a veteran in self-confidence and self-conceit. I feared nothing; I dared to tackle anything; I always had, and I had n't been downed, either because I never had fought against more than my match, or because that mysterious something called luck, for want of a better title, had always watched over me.

As I did n't know myself, I placed no limit upon my capacity, and started in to do what I wanted to, be it under, over, or at the plane of my ability. To this day, I have never satisfied myself as to whether or not my rapid rise was beneficial or otherwise. Perhaps a longer while in the traces would have made me a better driver in the end; on the other hand, my early assumption of responsibility may have given me a boosting-start sufficient to carry me further into my work than I could in the same time have travelled as a slower and more careful pacer.

At any rate, I had the cash, not enough of it, but as much as I thought I needed —

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money earned by the sweat of my pen — and I had, or thought I had, the experience and the ability to start and maintain a daily paper of my own.

Looking back upon myself, to those my days of immaturity, my now better-set modesty does n't object to my feeling that I certainly had the assurance and the energy for success-making; and truly, assurance and energy, sometimes with only fair direction, win out on many a field of strife, where too much discretion, lacking assurance and energy, falls to rise no more.

I was a high-pressure boiler, with a forced draft. I screwed down my safety-valve, hung a cap over the gauge, and started the Muchtown *Evening Journeyer*, the first, and for a long time the only, daily newspaper in Massachusetts' Far West.

My first intention was to buy an interest in one of Muchtown's staid old papers, which were profitably running by the water which had past, and with it as a basis, launch a daily edition. But somehow my annexation plans failed to connect. The post-office editor of one of the papers, and the book-

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store editor of the other, and I, did n't, or could n't, get together. I was too rapid for them, or they were too slow for me.

In the hour of my perplexity, a ravenous wolf in fashionable clothes appeared unto me. He had one of those confidential, purring, please-may-I-do-you-a-favor voices, which can sell mine-less mining stock and squeeze dollars out of sense. He was a politician; he carried a large and varied assortment of candidates.

The county papers, with exceptional unanimity, were opposed to the election of his men. Something must be done, and I was the handy something. I had a few thousand dollars, and he knew it.

He was n't a thief, as thieves go. He would n't have robbed a till, or burst a bank, or have done anything that the arm of law could reach; but he would take another man's money, to serve another man's purpose, if that other man was his employer.

"Don't connect with the old fogies," said he. "They're our unburied dead. Start for yourself, in the full bloom of your youthhood, a daily paper of your own, the

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first daily in the western West of Massachusetts. What honor! What glory! You will go down in history as the nation's youngest and brightest journalist!" etc., etc., etc., etc.

I bit at the bait. I swallowed both hook and line. "The bloom of your youthhood" caught me.

Instead of doing what any boy or man of half sense would have done — buy an old weekly on which to base a daily — I deposited my few thousand dollars in the Muchtown bank, ordered type, press, and engine, and had the empty honor of giving Muchtown what she needed, but was n't ready for, and was certainly unwilling to properly support — a daily newspaper.

I plunged into the local journalistic sea without boat, raft, or line. It was swim or drown. I swam, and I'm swimming yet; but there are still upon me the scars of storm from the angry waters which unmercifully dashed me against whole reefs of rocks and scraped me upon the shoaly sands.

In the height of the national campaign, the Muchtown *Evening Journeyer* pulled its flag to the masthead and fired the first daily

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newspaper gun heard in Massachusetts' Far West. My printing press had the usual opening fit, — the engine balked, and the ink was stubborn, but I got my paper out, got it out all over the town, and spread it broadcast into the towns north, south, east, and west of me.

The Muchtown *Evening Journeyer* fell flat, so flat that I could hardly see it for flatness. Everybody was disappointed. Expectation looked for a paper as big as the New York dailies, and with as many daily locals as the weekly locals of both the weekly papers put together, with news of the whole world complete in detail.

The *Evening Journeyer* was actually twice as good as Muchtown had a right to demand, contained every day more news than either of the weeklies had for the week, and more general news, and twice as much local news, as any daily paper carried in any town twice as large.

But what of it? What if my paper was the best of its kind? Muchtown's Tone adjusted its glasses, glanced at it, and hitched up its nose.

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Possibility could n't produce the paper she wanted. The business men kicked at the rates. They wanted to pay a daily for advertising the same amount per week that they paid a weekly.

"But we come out six times a week," I said. They could n't see it that way. A week was a week to them.

Of course the *Journeyer* got advertising. Push and energy will get anything.

Gradually people began to realize that the *Journeyer* was as good as its support, and everybody seemed to be reading it. With the tide running my way, I made a dash which startled my people and squelched my enemies. I enlarged the *Journeyer*. Before it was five weeks old, I actually added four columns. Muchtown awoke with a start. She rubbed her eyes, and bought the *Journeyer*.

Dear old people, how I fooled them!

True, I added four columns, one to a page, but I did n't increase the reading matter an inch. Not another compositor did I hire, nor did I set an extra line of type. I simply filled those added columns with half-dead advertisements. But the *Journeyer* looked

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big, and in that town, quantity was ahead of quality. Muchtown wanted bigness, and I gave it to her.

In this love-of-muchness particular, the rest of the world was very much like Muchtown. Here I learned one of my most valuable lessons in business, a lesson never to be forgotten by one who would succeed financially. The world, the bigger part of the world, if not the better part of the world, uses its eyes more than its brains; and as the bigger a thing is, the easier it is to see it, the very bigness of a thing, and often the outside bigness of it, is frequently the biggest factor in the making of money-making success.

XV

IN those days paper was six cents a pound, half real rag; and we wet our paper and jammed it into a sheet-covered rubber-blanket, so that the blind could read it by fingering its back. There was but one Associated Press, the closest corporation on earth, with full membership, and the few real telegrams which came to the *Journeyer* cost me a cent a word.

Plates were unknown, save for stories, farming news, and for "How to Cure a Grease Spot." Antimonial lead in those days sang its glorious song of —

"The click, click, click
Of the type in the stick."

Now, alas, it's —

"The drop, drop, drop
Of the brass in the slot."

The *Journeyer* had new type, all new; new stands, new cases, new stones, and a new press which could be coaxed to twelve hundred an hour. I had a press-room, a mailing-room, an office, a city editor's room, and an inner-

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sanctum, where under sunlight or lamplight I wrote the wordy words which burned me more than they did my readers.

Editor, publisher, and owner of the *Journeyer!* All mine, from the little paper-rolling mailing machine to the stoves. Great was I, greater than I've ever been since, great in the full feeling of my greatness. I could say what I pleased, and I did, — altogether too much. Muchtown was shocked. Untied life, going it alone, unchaperoned and unconfined, was something she had never seen save on circus day. I was on the local newspaper top, and from my eminence I twirled the fingers of my dare-deviltry, and defied that part of the earth which came within the *Journeyer's* field of circulation. Nothing fazed me. With stylographic pen I tackled, with equal agility, any question from Muchtown fences to Egyptian borders. Politics, religion, society, courts, business, news, all in all fell under my pen-axe.

I threw ink like water, fearing nobody, afraid of nothing, and absolutely independent in all things save politics; for my father was a Republican, his father was a Republican,

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I was a Republican, and the *Journeyer* was Republican. But I was n't afraid of politics. I was a conscientious political duty-doer — Republican without knowing why. When I learned more, I did n't become a Democrat, but I got to voting for men, not for party, giving the Grand Old Party the preference when it deserved it.

I was editor-in-chief, publisher, and general manager. My duties covered every department save sweeping the office and making the fires. I wrote, or stole, two columns of editorial matter a day; composed the dramatic and musical stuff; attended the conventions, funerals, and parties; edited, or clipped, a good part of the general news; and selected a part of the miscellany.

My associate editor in name, but book-keeper in practice, was much my senior in age and my junior in experience and ambition. He smoked all the time, and gave the balance of the days to making out bills, to paying the men, and to wielding the biggest pair of shears in Muchtown. He was one of those calm, collected fellows, who unruffledly meet all things, and he was as contented on little

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pay as he would have been on more. So long as he could spend all that he had he was happy, and he was happy all the time.

My city editor — I called him that to please him — scoured the town from morn till night. He got into all the lanes and crevices. His nose for news kept him on the continuous scent; and he got it all, every bit of it, the very good, the good, the very bad, and the bad. The *Journeyer* was never scooped. Nothing happened, and nothing could happen, away from this man's penetration. . He wrote like a Mississippi steamboat with hams and cotton for fuel; he never slept; his pencil never cooled. He was a marvellous man, successful in everything save in the management of himself. If he could have done for himself one tenth of what he could do for others, he would have been the editor of the *Journeyer*, and I should have worked for him. He was irrepressible. The length of his experience, the breadth of his learning, the circumference of his originality, and the diameter of his perseverance, carried him everywhere and brought him back again.

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“Mr. New,” said he to me one day after we had gone to press, “why are you the boss, and I, twice your age, your workman?”

I knew, but I did n’t want to tell him. So I evaded the question, and in reply, said, “What’s your explanation?”

He sat in thought, while the rings of conciliatory smoke floated above him. I watched him intently. Once I thought his face was about to reflect the outline of an explanation, but quickly he drew the lines together, and said soberly,

“I guess because fellows like me are needed to show up fellows like you.”

My suburban reporters? Jumping cats! How the people stared when I dubbed them that! Suburban reporters! Muchtown was proud of them, and so were her suburbs. These reportorial outsiders were a medley of men and women — drug clerks, teachers, ministers, horse-shoers, and boys; but they got the news. The county was mine, and my collectors took what belonged to me.

One of these suburban reporters in particular was a racer. His long hair never got in his way, and his frayed pantaloons did n’t

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keep him out of anywhere. Where news was, he was.

Another of my outskirting news-getters lived in Bolton, a village about six miles from Muchtown. Bolton contained twice seven hundred and fifty people. I say "twice seven hundred and fifty," because half of the town folks lived between the middle and one end, and the other half lived between the middle and the other end. The people of one side were known as "He-ists," and the abutting folks were classified as "Him-ers."

He of the "He-ists" built a church and a library, and Him of the "Him-ers" duplicated them on his side of the town. Both Mr. "He" and Mr. "Him" were prosperous manufacturers, and both gave in monumental chunks. Each library bore the name of its giver, and each church, although masquerading under some other appellation, was known by the name of the one who built it and paid the bulk of its running expenses.

Bolton was a two-man town, but the rivalry was as much as half friendly, and the recipients of the competing bounties revelled in philanthropic luxuries.

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Con Cobb, my Bolton correspondent, was a local celebrity. He was a composite genius, a success in combination. His stony hillside farm paid between the rocks. His newspaper route was profitable; he not only sold papers to those who wanted to read them, but he created readers. His daily bulletins, hand-chalked on a blackboard in front of his store, forced folks to buy the papers for sale inside. His depot stage and express wagon picked up a daily mess of dimes and quarters. He sold a horse a month, and every one of them was up to representation. Con Cobb could diagnose horse-quality with supernatural accuracy. As he always got good stuff in buying, he did n't have to lie to sell. Next to the two manufacturers, Con made more money than any five or six Boltonites put together. But outside of his farm, his teams, and his store, he did n't have a cent. Every available dollar went into his postage-stamp library. Show him the corner of a stamp, and he could tell its history. His memory was like a cash-register. It recorded everything that touched it. In the crevices of his brain were stored the detailed pedigrees

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of every living thing within the circuit of his travels.

I rode on the box with him one day.

"Hello, Bill!" he shouted to a boy in front of a store, as we were passing. "Here's a nickel to help celebrate your birthday."

Then, turning around, he lifted his hat to a pretty girl.

"I'll be at the 6.15 train to meet him," said he.

"How did you know he was coming?" asked the girl, with a blush.

"Ain't this the first Monday in the month?" was his reply.

Then he said, turning to me, "See that fellow over there? That's Smith's boy, the smartest kid in Bolton. He got ninety-two in arithmetic, ninety-eight in spelling, one hundred in geography, ninety-nine in history, and about the same in his other studies."

"How did you know?"

"Asked him," replied Con, laconically.

Before I was over my surprise, he was hailing another, an elderly man.

"Jim!" he shouted, "tell your wife that Jones has got the cambric she was ask-

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ing for three months ago. Came in yesterday."

I rode with him to the stable, and after he had unharnessed the horses, he sat on a nail keg, pulled some loose sheets of paper from his pocket, wet his pencil, and inside of twenty minutes he had given me to-morrow's budget of news. Every item had a name in it, and some of them contained a dozen names, and every name was spelled correctly.

And not a cent did these reporters cost the *Journeyer*. They worked for a free copy of the paper, free tickets, and free glory.

My two foremen, the chief and his assistant, were far better men than I paid for; but they liked me five dollars a week's worth, and worked for fifteen and twelve dollars, respectively. As a perquisite they played captain and shortstop on the *Journeyer's* base-ball team, — the strongest batters and the liveliest fielders in all the county.

My cousin was my advertising man. He called himself business manager. His leading ability consisted of not being like me. John was a gentleman. He wore wide trousers, high collars, had three whole suits,

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two overcoats, a cane, and boarded at Muchtown's swellest hotel, actually paying eight dollars each and every week for a room with steam heat, some upholstered chairs, and a bath on the floor above.

John impressed people. His natural style surrounded him, protected him, and got business for him. He did n't ask for advertisements, he accepted them. He gave folks a chance to advertise, and they embraced the opportunity.

Really and truly, I don't think John knew as much as I did, and I say this in respectful humility. He had n't any experience, save the experience which should n't count; and he had never pushed himself against his inclination; but there was something about him, a latent force, that kept every one from getting nearer than an arm's-length to him. He was constantly surrounded with tailor-made clothes and apparent dignity. Whatever folks thought of him in his absence, they never failed to appreciate their insignificance in his presence. His very manner magnified him and belittled his associates, and made every one who came in contact

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with him, save an insignificant few, anxious to do his bidding.

“John,” I said to him one day, after I had scrutinized the advertising columns, “don’t you think that your clothing advertising is running low?”

He was just about to go out. Leisurely he finished pulling on his gloves.

“Newson,” replied he in his parlor-bred voice, “I am carrying a column more than I anticipated.”

He gave me one look. I can’t describe it. It was a look that looked into me and turned itself round inside of me.

I shivered, and said no more.

XVI

MY editorial room was papered and carpeted. The stove that heated it was nickel-plated. My desk had pigeon-holes and a roller top. Here I "received" both the Muchtown "elect" and those who had n't been chosen.

One warm and sunny afternoon a woman entered. I kicked the stove door shut, and opened the drafts. Yet I shivered.

Looking at me with her icicle eyes, she said, "Are you the editor?"

I bowed.

"I am Margaret Matilda Matter."

"I await your pleasure, Miss Matter." I did n't take any chances in addressing her as "Miss." Even a side glance at her was sufficient to show the impossibility of an otherwise condition. Miss Matter was not ordinary. Inside and outside she was extraordinary. Take a couple of laths and hang a sheet on them; take a shingle, pad it a little, and put a shirt waist on it; set an apple on the top,—don't bother to pick out a plump one, take the apple as it comes,—paint the

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top of it with mucilage, and while it's wet, throw some horse-hair at it, and you'll have Miss Matter, all but her voice. Open all your organ stops, let the wind blow through the pipes, and you'll have only a faint intimation of its discordancy. She was dressed regardless of taste and price. The clothes she wore fitted her. If they had n't, both she and they would have presented a better appearance.

She sat down, or I thought she did. At any rate, there was a lowering of height and a hinge-like bending of joints.

"I called," she said, "to allow you to become acquainted with me."

I started, but she did n't notice it.

"In the name of literary Muchtown, I welcome you to our sacred and most exclusive circles."

I mumbled my thanks.

"I have here," continued she, "the report of our last meeting. In it you will find my paper on the 'Literature of the Peasant.' This essay I prepared especially for the Mothers' Club, but I gave a professional reading of it at the reunion of the Dante



CHARLES CARPENTIER

I am Margaret Matilda Matter.

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Dames. I shall permit you to use it, but you must be sure to print at the bottom of it, 'Copyrighted by Margaret Matilda Matter,' because it is to be a chapter in my new novel which, of course, you know that I am writing."

I bowed again. In those days I didn't like to voice my lies. It didn't seem so wicked to lie in quiet as it did to make a noise in doing it.

"You see," rattled she, "I have been making a study of the peasantry of the world for more than two whole weeks. I have just finished reading a book on the subject. You have read it, of course. It is entitled, 'Through Russia with an Umbrella.' And, besides, our servant girl used to be a peasant, and she is giving me much valuable information. Really, I feel as though I were an expert on the subject."

I looked at her. Jumping jimmies! She was n't joking. I glanced at the manuscript. Three hundred pages of solid fine handwriting. And she expected me to print it! It would have exhausted all the type I had, and would have encroached on the dis-

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play fonts and the italics. Not knowing who she was, and having a suspicion that she might be what she did n't look as though she could be, — a woman with a society pull, — I did n't then refuse her offer. I thanked her profusely; and she went away, evidently satisfied with me and more satisfied with herself.

I read a part of the manuscript. She must have dipped her pen in liquid dictionaries and have allowed it to run riot over innocent paper. Examination showed that every word was authorized by some authority, but she strung the words together, fairly crowded them, so that there was no room in between for pause or rest. I have never seen such a conglomeration of wordy meaninglessness, such a stupendous aggregation of written nothings. She must have squeezed her dictionaries, for no self-respecting books would have voluntarily contributed what she took from them.

“Who is she?” I asked my city editor.

“She is She,” replied he. “She’s the Muchtown Much, the Whole Thing.”

“What?”

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"She is Muchtown's Female It, the society boss of the exclusive set."

"Go on."

"To be serious, Mr. New," said he, "she is the only daughter of the late Matthew Matter, who was the richest man who ever lived hereabouts. He left her all he had. She is the accepted leader of Muchtown's Tone, president of half of the clubs, and patroness of everything that the Push pushes."

"An authoress?" I inquired.

"Well, she writes," replied he, "writes by the yard."

"Any of her stuff ever been published?"

"Not that I ever heard of."

"Any more like her?"

"Dozens."

"Whew!"

"They will all call, one at a time or in bunches."

They did. I saw them all in the city editor's presence. He was a born diplomat. He kept me from making the breaks I wanted to make. They came to unload their pen-raspings. He purred at them, said pleasant things, and none went away dissatis-

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fied. Whenever the stuff they brought was short, I printed it; and when it was long, too long for any newspaper to handle, I editorially referred to it, and advised the author to issue it in book or pamphlet form. In this way, many a profitable job reached our printing department, which if it had n't been for the city editor's tact would not have come our way.

If it had n't been funny, it would have been pathetic to see the lazy folks crawl for literary honors. There were few would-be *littérateurs*. A would-be anything may have some energy back of his unnatural ambition, but the literary Muchtowner would far rather sit at playing-to-be than to get out and try-to-be.

Every member of the several Morning Clubs, which always met in the afternoon, was the author of an unpublished manuscript. Each one had shelved the masters of literature and was satisfied with the trash of transient popularity. Their conversation was a medley of fashionable tittle-tattle — a joke to all save themselves. Muchtown's literary quality was below the line of total absention.

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The *Journeyer* had two unesteemed contemporaries, the *County Bird* and the *Muchtown Moon*. Both were blanket sheets, one all home-print. I waited for the editors to call upon me, but neither of them came. I gave my pride a narcotic, and called on the editor of the *Bird*. I stayed a whole hour, and patiently waited for the welcome which did n't come. But I had my revenge. The *Bird* had just clothed itself in a new dress of type. At the top of my editorial column, on the morrow, appeared the following squib: "The *County Bird's* new dress of type makes it one of the brightest papers (typographically) west of the Connecticut River." The *Bird's* editor never forgave me, and he never missed an opportunity to hit the *Journeyer*, fairly or unfairly; and I, like a consummate ass, answered his attacks. For months we aired our differences and spilled our spleen, to the disgust of our readers, — the *Journeyer* ahead one day, the *Bird* in the van the next; neither ahead of the other more than a week at a time.

The *Moon's* editor was a pretty decent sort of a fellow. If he had n't been a Democrat

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and I a Republican, we should have been chums. When I first met him on mutual ground, where the stakes of party lines were driven too low to show, he actually apologized for not calling upon me. Think of it! A Democratic editor apologizing to a Republican for not treating him with the same respect he might have shown to a fellow-partisan. And this was in 1880!

XVII

I NHERITED two contagious diseases in their most violent form — Congregationalism and Republicanism; or, to put it more broadly, Denominationalism and Partisanism. I could n't help it. To have fought against it, had I then realized my slavery, could n't easily or quickly have led me out of bondage. My shackles must either wear off, rust off, or be broken off by a shock.

My forebears were godfathers and godmothers at the birth of Congregationalism, and had never practised at rocking any other cradle. They were, besides, denomination-
alists of the narrowest cut, — all save father, who was conventionality's outcast. They read the staid old *Congregationalist* in its days of uncompromising glue-ivity to its party's rigid dictations, and accepted no religious thought or precept unstamped with its approval.

Politically, they were dyed in the Republican pot, and supported those principles which the Grand Old Party, and its predecessors, believed in, or at any rate, advocated.

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They were Republican-Congregationalists, or Congregational-Republicans, — fruits of the early planting of denominational partisanship.

I recall a good story about father's brother. Uncle Ase for twenty consecutive years had been chairman of the school committee at Offville, a country town, seven miles in geographical distance from Boston, but a hundred miles away, if one judged by its looks and the people in it.

Partly because Offville connected with Boston by the stage line only, but largely because of the poor pay, the school committee had difficulty in obtaining competent teachers. As the town in population was large enough for a high school, it had to have one, in spite of the protests of its inhabitants. A room over a paint shop was leased and the opening of the high school awaited a teacher.

One of the school committee ran across a young man, who for special reasons desired to locate at Offville. As he had money, salary was n't a consideration. He was a college graduate and a born teacher. The school

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committee always met at Uncle Ase's house, and the meetings were conducted with oppressive and hindering formality.

"Mr. Chairman," said one of the members, "I move that we proceed to consider the application of Mr. Mann for the position of head master of the Offville high school."

"I second the motion," said another.

Uncle Ase put the question in true parliamentary style, and declared it carried. Turning to the other two members of the committee, he said, as though addressing a town meeting:

"Gentlemen, as Mr. Mann's name has been formally presented to our committee, and as we have voted to consider his application, I beg to officially announce that his candidacy is open for discussion."

Just before the deciding vote was taken, Uncle Ase, turning to one of the members, asked,

"Is he a Republican?"

"No," replied the member, "he's a Democrat."

Instantly a look of horror spread over Uncle Ase's face. The lines tightened and

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set like hardened plaster. In vain did the other members argue with him and present every reason why an affirmative vote should be cast. But Uncle Ase's face never changed, and his determination did n't waver, save once, when the fact was brought out that Mr. Mann was a Congregationalist. Uncle Ase might have accepted the candidate if he had been a Republican and a Methodist, but a Democrat, even if a Congregationalist, hardly approached the underside line of total depravity.

The *Journeyer* was Republican,—Republican from margin to centre. Membership in the Republican Party, according to the *Journeyer*, passed a man into bliss without an examination. The *Journeyer* spoke of the Democrats in a low, hushed, shocked voice, as though they were beyond the pale of respectability, and irresponsible for their sins of ignorance. It pitied the Democrats with the condescension of that superior sympathy which great and good men pour out for the fallen tribes of perverts.

To be a Republican was to be exalted, even if one combined horse-stealing with his party

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loyalty. To be a Democrat was to be next to forever lost, and the *Journeyer* labored with such a one, beseeching him to forsake his evil and enter the proper fold before the tolling of the midnight hour.

Six weeks with the *Journeyer* in Muchtown knocked more nonsense out of me, and more sense into me, than had ever backed and filled over my bigoted scuppers. My hardened stubbornness was crushed into pliability.

I actually went into council with myself, and gave myself, my real self, a hearing. I was beating my way amongst the rocks of life, and every time I hit a ragged edge I bled conceit. Weak and shattered, I went out into the free air and breathed in panting breaths the unadulterated oxygen of truth; and, then, for the first time, I saw the flag of freedom wave for all, learned that man on earth can be no higher than a citizen, and that the Citizenship of Man is as non-partisan as the Fellowship of Heaven.

I, and my *Journeyer*, started in to follow the Great White Light, which shone above party fences and denominational forests. We became non-partisan, and the circulation

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doubled; so did the advertising; and grieving Republicans shared its reading with happy Democrats.

The *Journeyer* was a come-to-stay institution, and, with the everlasting hills, jealously guarded the mountain-framed plain of Massachusetts' Far West. It paid the paper and me to be semi-good, and we were as good as our advertisers allowed and our subscribers permitted.

I was lonesome. I missed Mary more than I ever had before, partly because we did n't see each other so often; and then the greater distance between us seemed to make it all the harder for us to stand the separation. Muchtown was too far away from Yarmouth for a monthly visit, and I could n't well be spared from the office, for the *Journeyer* had n't gone much beyond the expense-paying line.

I grew tired of love by mail. If there had been a long-distance telephone I could have stood it better. My Monday's letter did n't reach Yarmouth until Tuesday, and it was Wednesday before a reply came back to me.

Muchtown was full of girls. Many of them were as pure and as sweet as the hill-

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top flowers, and some of them were noble women, thoroughly competent to work in double harness and pull their full half of the load. I did n't refuse society. I entered it, and spent many an evening with Muchtown's women, but not one of them touched me to the quick of my heart, and none of them duplicated Mary. We had tried each other by the test of time, and neither was found wanting. I longed for a home, and a home meant Mary. I wrote to her, and suggested marriage. In the bottom of my safe-deposit vault, in an envelope fastened with a double seal, is the reply she sent me. A few lines of it can never be forgotten.

"Newson, dear," she wrote, "we are not ready. We are in the crisis of our business life. Let us wait, not you for me, or I for you, but both for us. The better part of our lives is before us. Let us sacrifice some of the little present for the big future."

She was right. The excitement of marriage would have broken the thread of my success. I was too young, too immature to marry and establish a paper at the same time. I must get ready to become a "double-one."

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Fortunately our love was of the enduring kind, altogether too healthy to sulk and pine at sight of the obstacles which have far more apparent than real importance.

Who dares to measure the power of love? It is unweighable; beyond the scope of estimate. In its natural purity it rules the universe, and before it the fires of hell turn into cascades of soothing waters. Braced by Mary's ever-flowing love, I threw myself into the middle of my work, and, like a turbine wheel, I whirled on to victory.

XVIII

THE Muchtown *Journeyer* of the previous Saturday was printed in Republican crimson and reeked in partisanship.

The paper of the following Monday was independent of party and untrammelled by policy.

At one shake it had freed itself from all encumbrances and had become a newspaper for the people, untied to politics and as free as unbreathed air. Muchtown rubbed her eyes, gave them another rub, rubbed them again, stared, and blinked. Independence, in her rounds, had never before stopped off at Muchtown. They had to be introduced.

The *County Bird* had never roosted off the Republican perch, and the Muchtown *Moon* was Democratic to its centre. Muchtown's most mossy inhabitant had neither seen nor heard of a non-partisan paper, and it was currently believed that partisanship was as essential as ink to the publication of a newspaper.

The Great-Springfield-Monarch-of-Central-Massachusetts, a newspaper of inter-

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national reputation, was not independent, except to be independent of its name, which billed it other than what it was.

An independent newspaper! The impossible was occurring. Muchtown, after her surprise, settled down to like it, and boasted of her unique possession. The independent *Journeyer* sprang into favor. It was what the people wanted, but had not known they wanted.

“Muchtown first, the world afterwards,” was the *Journeyer’s* motto. A new reporter was added, and the town was raked for news, and none got away. My men haunted the depot, waylaid the stranger, and interviewed the minister, the lawyer, the banker, the baker, men, women, children, and everybody. The *Journeyer* was a mirror on a pivot; it reflected all about it.

The Tone sneered at it, and read it; Muchtown’s business patronized it; Muchtown’s real people were its friends.

The *Journeyer* was generally fair; it had little water to carry and few axes to grind; it told the legitimate news, without much prejudice to position or lack of position.

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If the tradesman's wife did anything worth chronicling, she was chronicled, and no less was the society bud and aristocrat.

On the *Journeyer's* pages the Worthy All sat side by side; in its columns, all men and women were theoretically equal.

Its news was all news, unbought and uninfluenced by free passes, May Fair ice-cream, charity cigars, or much of anything else save its advertisers. To ask a local paper to antagonize its advertisers is as unbusinesslike as it is to attempt to run a milk route with the milk you drink yourself, or to keep a market with only the kind of meat you use for your family consumption.

The *Journeyer* was more of a lens than a shutter. It frequently told the truth, and occasionally actually handled naked facts with ungloved hands. Yet it outraged no sense of decency, pried into no heart secrets, and stirred no mud that it might be muddier.

Once in a while it seemed to be over-daring, to jump the bonds of precedent, and to fairly hurl itself along. But there was a method of self-preservation in my daring. I struck at general principles rather than at specific

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men and things. With the minimum of risk, I acquired the maximum of reputation as a ferocious independent. By giving my readers one sensation a week, they looked for it every day. I selected my "risks" with consummate care. The death of Old Cole gave me a harmless opportunity to display apparent courage. He had n't a friend nor a near relative, and his few distant relations were outside the circle of the *Journeyer's* circulation. Here was a safe proposition, so I let my pen fly. At the top of the editorial column appeared the following:

"Old Cole is dead. He left a million dollars. The church was crowded. A thousand dollars' worth of flowers filled selected places. The "cousins" were artistically dressed for sympathy. Three ministers conducted the exercises, and not one single one of them said one single word of truth about the deceased. There was n't any good about Old Cole that anybody ever discovered. He was a human depository of money. He was the late president of the biggest swindling scheme that ever struck and stuck the county. Nobody liked him, and there was absolutely no reason why anybody should care anything about him. Now that he's dead, he's the 'Late Carter Cole, Esq., our eminent fellow-citizen.'

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“Cole’s death didn’t pay his debts to the world. Dying did n’t repudiate his swindlings. Being dead does n’t make him any better than when he was alive. He was a swindler, a liar, and a thief, and everybody knew it. He was a bad example to every boy and to every ambitious young man. He was a living model of ‘Honesty is the worst policy;’ and this lauding him to the skies, speaking well of him because he’s dead, can have only a bad effect upon the community.

“The less said about Cole, the better; and it is positively wrong to speak well of him just because he’s dead. Nobody ever spoke well of him while he lived.

“The memory of a bad man is just as deserving of condemnation as is the act of the bad man while he lives.

“Expressions of condolence to the relations are ridiculous. Congratulations are in order.

“At the Board of Trade meeting, to-morrow, resolutions of regret are to be formally passed, and every man who signs the resolutions knows that he’s a liar. There is not a man in this town but what is mighty glad that Old Cole is dead, and expressions of hypocritical regret shouldn’t be allowed to carry water in any honest community.”

The Annexville school committee was n’t popular. Its three members knew nothing about anything, and less about education.

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Not one of them was an advertiser, and two of the candidates for the to be reorganized board advertised to the extent of full columns twice a week. Here was a glorious opportunity for the presentation of profitable and apparently fearless independence. One of the county papers gave me the cue. Editorially, I said:

“Our esteemed contemporary, the *Franklin Fossil*, is right this time, as is n't its wont. Brother Gimp says: ‘The Annexville school committee is n't in favor of modern school-house ventilation.’

“That school committee is n't in favor of anything except two meetings a week, one to vote to do a thing, and the other to rescind it.

“‘I move,’ says Hank Hack, the livery stable educator.

“‘I move to reconsider,’ drawls Roger Roundhead the ex-plumber and committee on text-books.

“‘I move to remove the last move!’ shouts Skipper Swift, our late lake captain.

“And so they go, tumbling back thirteen inches every time they get a foot ahead. For broad gauge, sublime, acre-wide caution, that board of education is unparalleled in the annals of confounded conservatism.”

Here's a bit of dramatic news that, strange as it may seem, did n't cut a subscriber from

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off my books. It actually brought in a new advertiser:

“Actor Wing, of New York, made a big hit at the opera house, last night. Right in the middle of the last act, when things were kind of interesting, Muchtown’s best dressed ladies reached for their hats and wraps, and nobody could see or hear the finale. Just then Actor Wing stepped to the footlights, and said in a trumpetic voice:

“‘Will the women and men kindly be patient, and excuse the cook-ladies and wash-ladies who are obliged to be home at eleven o’clock?’

“Well, the audience was still to a woman, and when the curtain fell, nobody seemed to be in a hurry to get out.

“No lady, we don’t care if she is dressed in silk and diamonds and lives on the Square, ever, except in an emergency, puts on her hat or coat or gets ready to go until the final curtain. The lady who disturbs an audience is a cheat. She robs others of what they’ve paid for, and she’s a sneaking kind of a robber, for she is n’t brave enough to do anything the law could punish her for.”

When I felt dangerously independent, and there arose within me an irresistible desire to give vent to my pent-up feelings, which like waves of foam lashed me in and out, I

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located the plot at Albany, or at Springfield, or spoke of the incident as occurring in a town not a thousand miles from Muchtown. I recall the following editorial, which luckily I located at the thousand-miles-away spot:

“With cart-loads of flowers, borrowed potted plants, and all the wedding fixings, it was n’t a pretty wedding — this knotting of the pale-faces, at a church not more than a thousand miles from Muchtown. The groom had consumption and general debility written all over him, and the bride’s bloodless face drooped on a stem too weak to hold its colorless flower. Outraged Nature got mad, and worked the organ pedals, and a medley of dead and wedding marches beat time for Weakness and Sickness, as they, arm in arm, walked up the aisle to get their license to raise the kind of sickly, puny, fretty, good-for-nothing children, who are all the time tumbling under the wheels of progress. ‘What God hath joined together let no man put asunder,’ irreligiously lisped the white-haired parson. What sacrilege! Trying to make Heaven an accomplice to the mating of disease. That church should be in better business.”

Believe me or not, as you choose, when I say that even in those closed-up days, when conventionalism was a part of the air we breathed, there were a few people who openly

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thought as I did, and there were many people who inwardly were in sympathy with those then radical sentiments. I discovered that people as they run, and often those under the conservative yoke, admire the man who says what he feels, if he says it as though he meant it, and that often the dissenter will file no expressed objections if the plain truth teller does n't tread on his individual corns. Even the fool is n't in favor of other than his own folly. The man who dared, even in Muchtown, was more of a fellow, and more respected, even by those who differed from him, than was the man who allowed himself to be managed by prevailing customs; and yet there were hardly a handful of active thinkers who thought aloud and who dared to do as they wanted to do. The world's greatest goddess — custom — was on a tottering throne, though she knew it not, and the knowledge of her frailness was unknown to more than a few of her subjects, and few of those enlightened few were ready to strike.

XIX

LIFE in Muchtown was pretty lively at times, in fact rather boisterous, but never rowdyish, save for the few plain "drunks" on Low Street and the frequent home-paralysis of the Tone. On the surface, at least, Muchtown people were reasonably respectable. They "let loose" away from home.

The Muchtown Opera House ran two shows a week; sometimes three, but never four. They went from a lecture on "Heads" to an exhibition of legs, and I'm bound to say that in the race for favor, legs won. Occasionally a good show and a good audience got together, but mighty seldom. Generally, the better the entertainment, the smaller the attendance.

Most of the shows were like the one I saw on my first visit to the theatre. The Boston Galaxy of Artists, — that's the way they were billed, — presented one of those sensational, hair-raising, and hysterical affairs which were very much in vogue in those days, and which still hold their audiences. The

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auditorium was packed with all kinds of listeners, with the Tone, the imitation, the would-be, and with the representatives of the great common mass in big majority.

“Hearts Upset” was the name of the medley-drama. In the cast were six males; seven females; thirteen pistols; four Winchester; three bloodhounds; one saw-mill, with extra large buzz-saw; three dens of thieves; one horse (billed as worth a thousand dollars, really high at fifty cents); one snow and sleet blizzard; two thunderstorms; one rapid transit moon which did six hours business in sixteen minutes; four bowie-knives; one rag baby of the “Me child, me child, who will save me child?” brand.

The first act opened with the usual asinine conversation between two servants. No one heard what they said, and no matter. Muchtown society is always late, and nobody hereabouts is allowed to hear the opening lines. Then the star villain came in. He said — no matter what he said; he said everything he should n’t have said. Right in the middle of his lines the head-hero rode in on horseback.

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He and the star villain had a fight, and before it had a chance to be a draw, the leading lady, with a thousand dollars' worth of second-hand, mildewed, fixed-over clothes, chasséd in and separated them.

In the second act two men are killed, and the killing goes on until only the boss-hero, his head-girl, and a dog are left.

Just before the last curtain was about to drop, when the ladies and gentlemen were beginning to hustle into their rubbers and clothes, and there was more acting going on in the pit than on the stage, Claude, that's the handle-name of the fellow who loves the head-girl, said, loud enough for us to hear over the din:

"My precious, dear, darling, lovely bundle of saccharine, at last we're together, alone in this great big world, alone, alone, for all have gone before us, gone to that bourne from which no traveller returns."

"Why don't you join the procession?" yelled a gallery god, and whack, the curtain pole struck the stage.

The acting was different from anything I've seen here or elsewhere. The company

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was made of stage sweepings, the dust of art, and the refuse of the drama. The play itself had not a single thing in it, except the end, worth writing on paper. It was too weak to hold up its own scenery. The acting would have been worse than the play, if the play had n't passed the line of competition. And yet the audience liked it, applauded, sobbed, and cried. Why? I'll tell you. Rotten as was its dialogue, exaggerated as were its lines, "bum" as were its actors, red wickedness was up against pale virtue, and wickedness got its deserts, and got them quickly. Justice hustled. In a crude way things turned out as we wanted them to, not according to the way they do in real life, but about as they should do.

As affairs seem to be going nowadays, it looks as though we're not likely to see virtue getting its reward, except the semblance of it on the stage. Something's the matter somewhere.

Muchtown was a circus town. A circus, be it ever so little, would stir her to the inner depths. Muchtown went circus mad. On circus day, Big Street and Little Street, and

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all the side streets, got together, and drank out of the same pink-lemonade bucket.

Pity every day was n't circus day! Nothing else could bring Muchtown out, all out, out in common. The Tone and the Un-tone met on the only local field of equality — the circus grounds. The Tuesday Morning Club meeting was cancelled, the Lonesome Art Exhibition was closed, the inmates of the Home-Made-Hospital were notified to postpone their dying or convalescence and wait till the show was over.

The city dweller has no conception of a country circus day. The wait and grab of Christmas, and the powdery patriotism of the Fourth of July, are but commonplace, and their importance sinks to the under side of nothing, compared with the intense excitement which begins the night before the circus's arrival, and which continues until the last wagon is pulled upon the platform car.

All of Muchtown's boys, many of Muchtown's girls, and hundreds of Muchtown's men and women were at the depot long before sunrise to see the circus train arrive, and this great concourse of people, growing larger



*The Tone and the Untone met on the only local
Field of Equality.*

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as the minutes flew, was equal to a town-full before the ringing of the breakfast bell.

Business was suspended, and only the candy stores and restaurants seemed to be in action. The streets were thronged with Muchtowners and with folks from within a fifteen-mile circuit. Native fakirs and imported fakirs sprang up on every street corner. Nobody was at home, and the store inmates lined the sidewalks, windows, and doorways, — waiting for the great parade.

Those who thought the circus wicked and would n't go, and those who went and did n't care who knew it, met on the common curb and together enjoyed the great free show. Some of the ministers sought special places of vantage, and the more conservative ones peeked around the corner, but they all took it in, — every one, — churcher and non-churcher, the goody-goodies and the very bads, the aristocrats and the every-day people. Whatever may have been their feelings, or their conscience-pricks, not one of them kept away from the free part of the show.

Perhaps the circus is demoralizing. I rather think it is. Personally I cannot ap-

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prove of any dangerous sport or exhibition where the danger part is *the* part; but the conscience which refuses to allow its holder to buy a circus ticket and to attend the paid part of the show, and yet permits him to take in the ticketless and free part, is the kind of conscience which is a detriment to its keeper and which has only the quality of cowardly hypocrisy.

One of Muchtown's pastors clambered up my front stairs at the first strains of the coming band, rushed to my front window, and missed nothing that passed. Jokingly, I said to him,

"Don't you know how very wicked you are? Think how you 'll shock your deacons."

Turning to me, with a twinkle in his eye, and yet there was earnestness back of it, he said:

"Do you know that there is nothing in the great, big, wide world that I like to see half so much as a circus. I 'm going to take in the parade, and I 'm going to the show this afternoon, and my wife is going, and so are the boys, and I 'm not going on account of the boys, but I 'm going because I want to go."

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“ Good for you!” I exclaimed, as I slapped him upon the back. “ Right or wrong, you are doing it openly.”

“ Perhaps I ’m wrong,” he said, soberly, “ but somehow it seems to me as though we all have to mix some wrong with our good, and if I make a specialty of circus-wrong, perhaps it will keep me from lots of worse wrongs.”

Notwithstanding that nearly every Muchtowner who could walk or crawl attended one of the circus sessions, there were hundreds who hypocritically proclaimed before the circus, at the circus, and after the circus, that they went on account of the children, — that the children might see the animals. It was indeed pathetic to see an old man dragging a tired boy, hardly more than a baby, through the tents, and to watch a mother lug an infant for her conscience’s sake.

So deep was Muchtown’s conventional conscience that there was an active demand for youngsters of all ages and sizes, on the part of the old maids, both male and female, and of the childless married folks. Any youngster, whether he were a boot-black or the son

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of a nabob, was in demand; in fact, the demand was way ahead of the supply.

The next day after circus day, I wrote my first, my only, and my last rhyme. I printed it, and this is the way it read:

“ He put five cents in the charity box,
With a prayer that it would go
To help the poor in other lands,
While he spent at Barnum’s show
Three dollars and a half for tickets,
To let his children see
A show he would n’t have missed himself,
For his biggest apple tree.”

I did n’t fancy the last line. It did n’t seem to be as good as the others. But it was the best I could do then. Anyway, it rhymed.

During circus day, Muchtown actually forgot that she was different from other places, forgot her exclusiveness, and the “ Old Clock on the Stairs ” ran down.

XX

IT seems that Mrs. Samuel Snobman, president of "Our Daughters," was at the opera house when Actor Wing said his say and the *Journeyer* wrote about it. She was mad, mad from her boughten hair down to her laced-in feet. You see, she had put on her hat and moved about before the show was over. She and her General called at my sanctum. They wanted satisfaction.

"You called me a thief," she began.

"I did," I replied.

"You admit it!" she shrieked.

I nodded.

"I want you to understand," she yelled, "that I'm a lady. Do you hear me?"

I remarked that I did n't have to wear ear-drums to hear.

"We want satisfaction," chimed in the lady's incumbrance.

"Want me to say you're a lady?"

"No!"

"What do you want, then?"

She was silent for a moment, then she started in.

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“You have insulted me!” she cried, —
“me, the President of ‘Our Daughters,’ a
member of one of our oldest families, — me,
a lady!”

“How?”

“You said that every one who disturbed
the audience was a thief.”

“I did, woman.”

“Don’t call me woman.”

“Very well, female.”

“Not that, for I am a lady, a lady!”

“Got your credentials with you?” I asked,
innocently.

“See here,” said the little General, pulling himself up to his diminutive full height,
“you’ve insulted my wife, and we demand
satisfaction.”

“I am sorry to say,” I replied, “that the
gentlemanly member of my staff, who gives
his personal, continuous, devoted, and conscientious attention to my Department of Satisfaction, is at the present moment attending a wedding on Hill Top Avenue. If you will favor the *Journeyer* with a call any time between 3 and 4 P. M., his office hours, I know that he will be much pleased to consider

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your application for satisfaction, to place it upon file, subject to his earliest convenient attention."

I smiled, and during the smile, Mrs. General and her incumbrance walked, or otherwise passed, through the door. The next day I received a written request that their names be stricken from the *Journeyer's* subscription roll. But I learned that the *Journeyer* still visited their premises; they bought it at the news stand.

Was I brave? Hardly. It does n't require heroic courage to show an independence which gains a dozen subscribers at the loss of one. The rank and file of Muchtown people were with me. The others did n't count. There were not enough of them, all told, to support the drug store which catered to their liquid delights.

Muchtown's population was reasonably permanent, yet it was subject to continual change. Sometimes it seemed as though a new family came on every train, and that the car that brought a new one carried away an old one. One of the latest arrivals was Gustavus Gile. He leased an old homestead in the

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fashionable section. There was some mystery about him, and rumor had located him in half a dozen different places previous to his coming to Muchtown. There were many stories against his integrity, and some of them proclaimed that he was a thief and a liar. But Gile knew his business; knew how to be respectable at cut-prices. He lay low for a year, bowed to everybody, was cordial, did n't take sides, and went to church. He paid his bills and bought notoriety. Folks began to forget about the stories. Those he traded with said they were n't true; those he was cordial to talked of exaggeration and did the "judge not" act; and as for the rest of the folks, they did n't care a continental anyway.

Then he began to sprout. The first thing he did was to contribute towards all the charities the newspapers talked about. Gile had a way of giving in secret from the house-tops. Then he joined the church; and he made the church ask him to come in, too. Of course, he forced his way in, but the innocent church folks did n't see it. Anyway he got in, and he never missed a Sunday.

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The next thing Gile did was to build a watering trough; that is, he chipped in fifty dollars, and we poor folks raised the rest; but the name of Gile was the one name chiselled in the block. Then he bought a lot of books for the library, and we elected him a trustee. Bought the job, of course, but we chumps had n't sense enough to know it. Then Gile began to bounce, and he became chairman of the board of selectmen, chairman of the library trustees, head hat-passer at the Gold Church, president of the Board of Trade, and treasurer of the savings bank. Gile got, by judiciously dropping two or three thousand dollars, what we would n't have given the best man in town who had worked from boyhood helping Muchtown to grow.

Mind you! Gile did n't give more than three thousand dollars all told. Then he began to float the King and Queen Oil Gusher Company, and to sell shares by advertising that the stock "would go up to-morrow." His plant consisted of one feeble-minded, crooked-necked, half-lost Texas hole in the ground, which may have thrown up a

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few buckets of oil too poor to be kept down; the gilt-edged, red-lined prospectus; and offices in our biggest block, with mahogany furniture you could see your face in. Gile had everything but oil. About every man in town — ministers, stable keepers, lawyers, everybody who had an extra fifty-cent piece — fairly rushed after the stock. Gile accommodated them. With a show of great feeling he helped Muchtown to get in “on the ground floor.”

Then Gile moved, and his furniture was only a mighty small part of what he took out of town.

Muchtown's ready money men were strapped, and I had n't any sympathy for them. Folks who can be fooled as easily as Gile fooled them, had no right to have money, and he did them a kindness in taking their money away from them.

XXI

COLONEL Carrott and family lived in Muchtown's longest, widest, and tallest house, at the junction of two fashionable avenues. The Mansion, as it was called, was as large as a hotel, and furnished better than most palaces.

Colonel Carrott was only twenty per cent fool, for nature had generously mixed sense with his ignorance. He knew how to make money, he had made money, he was making money; and with his knowledge of money-making came a something sufficient to tell him to hire done what he could n't do himself.

The Colonel had himself pretty well in hand; to an extent he knew his limitations. He was master of himself. He was all he wanted to be. Perhaps he could have been more had his ambition turned in other directions, but a fellow with a different ambition from the Colonel's would n't have had the Colonel's ambition. He was on the right side of himself. He knew no want which money could n't supply, because he did n't want the things money could n't buy.

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It was the Colonel's ambition to own the best and biggest house in Muchtown. He knew nothing about a home, and he cared nothing about one. His home, the only home he knew, was his house; and the kind of a house he wanted was the kind that out-housed all other local houses.

Colonel Carrott was the richest business man in town, although his business was not in Muchtown. Three or four others may have had more money than he — handed-down money, money which they did nothing to get, and consequently did not know how to use — but Colonel Carrott had worked for his money, and undoubtedly a part of it was obtained honestly; and all of it, according to his code of morals, came legitimately.

The Colonel was a man of the world, and this world was all the world he had or thought of, and he proposed to get all this world would give, and he did. He was n't a hypocrite. Good or bad as he was, he was on the outside what he was on the inside. He had had no education, and he knew it. He had n't any trained refinement, and he was aware of that also.

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But the Colonel understood the Colonel. Therefore, when he wanted a palace, he did n't start in to build one after his own ideas, because he had n't any, and he knew it. Right here his horse-sense came into play. A well-paid architect planned the house and superintended its construction; a landscape gardener laid out the grounds; an expert furnishing artist selected the furniture, the bric-à-brac, the paintings, the decorations, and everything else of importance, — all of them harmoniously, artistically, and beautifully blended; and their totality seemed to produce the home of refinement, education, and the highest grade of taste.

The Colonel's palace, inside and outside, was a monument of what hired brains can do when backed by the money of ignorance.

Colonel Carrott did not interfere.

"Say," he said to his architect, artist, and furnisher, "I'm goin' to have the best thing there be in Muchtown; sumptin' to knock 'em all out; and I want everythin' there be worth a havin'; all of them filigrees and such that ought ter be in it, set eatin'-room shelves, corners with jimcracks in 'em, floors to skate

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on; and don't you forget nothin' — but say, I don't want none of your over-did business; want things to look slick, just as they ought ter have to be; harmoniously like, that's it, to look as though I knowed how to do it myself. See?"

And they saw, and it was done.

The Colonel's ignorance was not the kind of ignorance easily fooled. He was paying for a specified number of square feet of refinement, and he knew how to get full measure.

In trade Colonel Carrott could squeeze water out of kiln-dried straw, and woe betide him who dared to resent his dictation; but in society he knuckled down, willingly paid the entrance fee, and took the seat his check called for. He wanted to be a society man, so he started in to buy position, and he got it, got it in Muchtown. The seats in Muchtown's Hall of Tone were for sale, and some of the front ones were occupied by fellows not unlike the Colonel, save that few of them had his sense and crude honesty.

Colonel Carrott made a hit. He paid the price for being free and easy and for never

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restraining himself. He bought a permit to say what he wanted to, to dress as it suited him, and to do as he pleased. What if his manners were those of the hostler? What if he wore the same clothes in both stable and parlor? His ways were his own ways, and his tongue said what he thought and felt.

There was something about Colonel Carrott, a strength of will rather than of character, and an aggressiveness, that carried him the way he wanted to go, pushed him ahead of others, and never let him fall more than temporarily from the top.

Muchtown opened her arms to Colonel Carrott, and Muchtown's society voted him her champion.

I recall a good story, told at the Colonel's expense:

Years ago, when Colonel Carrott was a youngster, he earned his first dollar trying to sell a horse on commission. The would-be buyer was a gentleman from the city who wanted a family horse for the summer.

"Is he afraid of the cars?" he asked. "If he is, I won't take him at any price, because I want him for my wife to drive."

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"Afraid of the cars!" exclaimed young Carrott. "Afraid of nothin'! I tell yer what I'll do, Mr. Man. If you'll agree to give me five dollars if he is afraid of the biggest train of cars on earth, I'll give you ten dollars if he ain't."

"Done!" exclaimed the gentleman. "The train's about due. We'll drive to the depot and see."

At the first sight of the engine the horse began to execute several original dancing steps, and it required the full strength of the driver to hold him.

"I'll take that fiver," said the boy, quietly.

"What!" ejaculated the gentleman. Then he thought a moment, took out his pocket-book, and handed young Carrott a five-dollar bill, with a remark that was not altogether uncomplimentary.

Colonel Carrott's wife was one of those jelly-made waddlers, fattened on fudge and fashion. She knew ten per cent less than nothing. But she was the wife of Colonel Carrott.

Did I say she knew nothing? Let me retract a little. She knew she was the Colonel's

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wife, and that knowledge was the sum total of her intellectuality. Maids washed her, and dressed her, and undressed her. She just kept still while they lifted her or rolled her into place.

When Mrs. Carrott sat down, she sat down all over, and where she sat she sat until unseated. Her poodle was ashamed of her, and her servants turned their faces when they passed. She was a great lump of fatty flabbiness, — a good-for-nothing-no-good.

Colonel Carrott, with all his trading shrewdness, knew nothing about buying wives. He took the first-comer, and never thought enough about her to know whether she pleased him or not.

Colonel and Mrs. Carrott had three sons. One of the boys was plain fool; there was n't anything eccentric about his folly; he was just a fool.

The other two boys differed from the common rowdy in that they were well dressed; from the bar-room loafer, in that they got drunk at home. They were representatives of Muchtown's Smart Set. They worked not, neither did they work others; they were

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too lazy to earn or to steal. You found them neither on the tennis field nor on the road. They were too indolent to play, too swell to work, and horse-driving was too much for their faded intellects.

Occasionally they played pool, but never billiards, for billiards is a scientific game. They spent most of their time doing nothing and drinking something. Their mother was n't to blame, for they never had a real mother. Really, I doubt if Mrs. Carrott knew whether she had two sons or three, although she was undoubtedly present at the birth of all of them. As for the Colonel himself, he did n't bother himself about the boys. He gave all three an allowance, and when he paid them he felt that he had finished his duty.

The Carrotts kept a dozen servants, beating Muchtown's single family record by three. Naturally, or rather, artificially, the Carrott mansion was the headquarters of Muchtown's Self-Dyed-Blue-Blooded Society. Here there was room enough, servants enough, accommodations enough, liquor enough, and money enough to suit all

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comers. The private ball-room would accommodate Muchtown's Bon-Ton, the dining-room was spacious enough for a banquet, and the reception-room was not below the dimensions of a small public hall.

Colonel Carrott was above Muchtown competition. With hard cash he had bought recognition, and he held the receipt. The other Muchtown society men and their families fought among themselves, one on top to-day, another on top to-morrow, with the Colonel always on the tip-top.

XXII

A LETTER a day from Mary, instead of three a week, was her suggestion. I reciprocated in number only. Mary limited me to a single page a day, unless a matter of importance required more space for its intelligent telling.

“Newson, dear,” she wrote, “I know that you love to write me, and you could n’t make your letters too long for me; but, dear, you have your work to do — our work — and you should have few stated duties outside of it. Write me just a pageful a day. I’ll write the long letters.”

Her letters were inspirations. She never missed a mail. I looked for them with love’s appetite. I referred all matters, even the little ones, to Mary. She had a judgment broad enough to bridge distances, a judgment not founded on women’s intuition, — not the lucky guess of chance, — but a studied judgment and disciplined sense which made her advice of momentous consequence to me. Sense, mutual interest, united ambition, and long tried love, harmoniously

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combined, are the growers of progress. Mary was no longer away from me, although I seldom saw her in the flesh. We had established a line of wireless telegraphy between us, which, working in conjunction with the mail, deprived me of nothing she had to contribute to our copartnership save her personal presence. She and I were one in spirit, and the temples of our heart simply awaited material annexation. We were apart, yet we worked together.

I entered into Muchtown's busy business and lazy society, and I attended everything, from Grand Army camp-fires to the society weddings, — all kinds of gatherings, from masquerades to family reunions.

The Bluine Club, an exclusive mixture of Muchtown Upper Crusts, was giving a "Selectine," in the parlors of Colonel Carrott's mansion, for the benefit of the prevailing charity.

The tickets, each hand-painted and enclosed in a red leather cover, were six dollars net, and obtainable only by written application properly endorsed by some member of the Club.

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Not for charity's sake, but for society's sake or for curiosity's sake all the Toners were present, and many of the Apers, who had no higher ambition than to occupy adjoining seats and to flutter when a Bluine smiled upon them.

This mixed musical was Muchtown's society "sweller" for the year. The committee, headed by Colonel Carrott's executive energy and common-sense, had eschewed alleged local talent and had engaged famous out-of-town artists.

The stage part of the show was a huge success, an artistic success, a popular success, and yet at times altogether too artistic and too classical to touch the inner chords of the audience, who were on more intimate terms with his Highness, "Captain Jinks," than with Chopin, Mozart, or Handel, and whose real tastes ran closer to a topical song than to musical moments with Mendelssohn.

Fortunately, the artists had intuitively sized-up their hearers, and the programme, while apparently completely classical, was not devoid of jiggy numbers, skilfully disguised and ingeniously sandwiched between the

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heavy stuff; and the performers took big liberties with the score, interpolating many a bar of jingle, and lightening up the sober tones so that at times it seemed as though the Old Masters were on a "jamboree."

The skirted part of the audience was overdressed to the naked point of under-dress, and every man wore a waiter's uniform. Incidentally they followed the gilt-edged programme, and occasionally listened to the music, laughed or giggled at inopportune times, and sat rigid when an undercurrent of stringed inspiration was at its flood. They came to see each other and to be seen, and the entertainment part was hardly more than an excuse for assembling.

The Honorable Franklin Frankfort, Muchtown's dandiest clubbist, sat behind "Josh" Jotter, Esquire, the mill-manipulator. The Honorable Franklin came in late. He tried to find the running place on his programme, and his eyes settled on a composition by Handel about to be performed by a famous Boston musician.

"Say," he said, grasping "Josh," Esquire, by the shoulder, "has Handel sung yet?"

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“No,” was the reply, “but he’s a-goin’ to pretty soon.”

And the Honorable Franklin Frankfort and “Josh” Jotter, Esquire, were by no means alone in their ignorance of music and of things musical.

Three months afterwards, the Grand Treasurer, his Assistant Grand, and their Associates, with the help of three Grand Auditors, figured out a surplus of ninety-seven cents, over and above expenses, and a great charity was relieved.

XXIII

I WAS about to say good-by to Muchtown.

I was soon to leave her hill-walled valleys, her tree-covered avenues, her one street of irregular blocks, her syrupy society; and her common people whom I loved as brothers, who had smiled me a welcome, and who would sob me a farewell.

Again Mary said "wait," when I suggested marriage. But she came to Muchtown when the sale of the *Journeyer* was under advisement, not as a mere lover, but as a partner and co-worker. She stood by my side, and we, not I, decided matters and settled them.

Of course, I occasionally lost my head and was overcome by the perfume of sentiment. How could I help it? What man with blood flowing in him can walk in the middle of the road when cozy nooks in beckoning shades cry for occupancy?

This was our usual way of procedure: first we talked business and planned our material future; then — and Mary took the

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initiative as often as I did — we dropped business.

A syndicate of capitalists, who knew how to run a newspaper, because they had never had anything to do with one, wanted an organ for they knew not what. They were dissatisfied with the *Journeyer*. It wasn't tony enough for them; they wanted more pages, deeper and thicker editorials, and other things which contribute to the few and not to the many.

They did n't know what they wanted, but what they did n't know they wanted, they thought they wanted. They proposed to establish a great inter-country metropolitan journal, a partisan newspaper, with no advertisements on the first page, and a Gothic-typed motto at the head of the editorial column. They wanted something big, and as a matter of fact bigness was about the only idea they had in the matter, beyond that it must be a red-lined Republican sheet dedicated to its Party's god.

These untyped and unlettered capitalists made me a fair and square business offer, an offer of more than the *Journeyer* was

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worth to me or to them. I loved the *Journeyer*; it was my first-born; it seemed to be a part of myself; but the *Journeyer* had its price, and its price was offered, and like a sensible man, I sold it. The *Journeyer's* buyers formed a corporation, with a president, four vice-presidents, a secretary, a treasurer, a board of thirty-two directors, a business manager, an assistant business manager, an advertising manager, two advertising solicitors, an editor-in-chief, a managing editor, a city editor, three outside editorial writers, five reporters, and sixteen paid out-of-town correspondents.

They bought a new press which was guaranteed to print more *Journeyers* in an afternoon than the whole town of Muchtown, and its suburbs, would purchase in a week; they put in a new dress of type; and they enlarged their paper from four pages, twenty-eight columns, to eight pages, forty-eight columns. They had a literary department, and an original story every day, and three columns of telegraphic news at a cent a word. They increased the cost of running the *Journeyer* to over six times more than its entire receipts.

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The editor-in-chief had just escaped from college, had two degrees and a head full of education. He was one of the twenty-seven editors of the *College Coo-Coo*, had actually written on an average a stickful of matter a week, and was filled to the head-top with lack of experience and strenuous enthusiasm.

The managing editor was an ex-druggist. The city editor was an imported article, who had never been in Muchtown, and knew nothing about it. The reporters were all college men, chums of the editor-in-chief, and each of them had written at least six essays. There was n't more than one practical newspaper man in the lot, and for three months the *Journeyer* was a sort of unhappy cross between a newspaper and a magazine. Then the capitalists sold it to a real newspaper man, a graduate of a printing office, for half the money paid me for it, and the *Journeyer* is still running, making money, and is as good a paper as Muchtown has a right to enjoy.

XXIV

WITH twice as much money as I had when I entered Muchtown, and with every cent of it in cash in the bank, subject to check, I cast about for a new location. I had carefully recorded the mistakes of my first independent venture, and I had separated them into their component parts, that I might the more closely study them, and the more perfectly learn of them.

I left Muchtown twice the man I was when I entered it, and fortified with a judicious number of blunders and of successful achievements; both kinds of results happily blended to my best advantage.

To some extent, at least to a much greater extent than before, I had discovered what not to do and how to keep from doing it. A year in the mill of experience between its hardened stones had pressed out of me much of my foolishness, and had turned me into much more successful shape.

I was calloused by experience, trained by hard exercise in life's gymnasium, and into me was beginning to run a stream of clearer

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sense, which dissolved some of my clots of conceit and rounded them into lumps of self-respect and self-reliance.

I was beginning to know myself, to know what I could do, to know what I could n't do; not fully, though, for I had still much to learn, and that realization began to put me into proper balance. My self-conceit did not all disappear, — enough remained to give me the self-confidence and courage necessary at this life-point; but I had my worst parts under some control, and the best of me was getting the best of my worst, although at times it did not seem to make rapid progress.

Where to go was the question. The world was longer and wider and broader to me then. Outside the boundaries of my native State was wilderness and intellectual chaos. The Muchtown pricks had n't bled me of my Massachusetts conceit. Even then, sore at my dashes against her rocks, I regarded my State as the State of all that was representative of the highest civilization.

It took another battle with New England conservatism to inform me that the State of my birth was only one among the American

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many, with a score of others as healthy, as vigorous, as modern, as progressive, as enlightened, as civilized, — and some more so. In the pride of my ignorance, I deigned not to consider any city or town outside of Massachusetts; for no other place could be worthy of me, worthy of my inheritance, worthy of my ability, and worthy of my conceit.

The rushing city of Northville, Muchtown's only acknowledged rival, — or rather, Muchtown's greatest enemy, for Muchtown officially admitted no rival, — shook opportunity in my face, but I brushed it away.

In those days Northville was smaller than Muchtown. I would n't descend. I reckoned a town by the number of its people, not by the enterprise of its citizens.

Great Barreler spread out its possibilities, and bade me welcome. Great Barreler! Bah! too small by ten thousand! Both my eyes rested upon Springfield, the biggest city of its size in America. I went to Springfield; I put up at the best hotel; I hired a horse; I wore a new suit; I talked with Springfield and allowed Springfield to talk with me.

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The Great American Newspaper did n't even nod to me, but there was something in its silence which seemed to suggest the probability of the kind of war that both mutilates and kills,—the war of ignorance. Wisely, I did not sound my battle cry. Even then discretion was the better part of me. I had some sense, and knew somewhat how to use it. I would let Springfield live without me, flourish without me, and she did.

Of course, there was Boston, my old home-city. But no, I would not return to the fields of my first struggles. I realized that Boston was larger than I was, and that many times my bank account would be too small to buy, or to establish there, anything worth while, and especially worth my while.

Quite naturally, I stopped off at Chillwell. I had been there before, and walked up its Back Street, so called because it was n't in back of anything in particular; and the street which it led into, rightly called Me Street because most of Chillwell's "Me's" did business on it.

I knew few in Chillwell outside of three or four speaking acquaintances. I had never

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spent a night there, save one at its hotel; and a hotel, and especially a Chillwell hotel, is no part of its town and has no local significance.

Because I knew nothing of Chillwell, save my street-eye-view of it, Chillwell impressed me. Externally it seemed to be a city of homes, of home-business, a rendezvous of home-pride, a geographical centre of local patriotism, good-will, and fraternity.

Mary had a cousin in Chillwell. She had visited her occasionally. This cousin was in love with her city. She did not realize, nor did Mary and I, that this love was first love and so far her only love. Cousin Carrie had never more than transiently breathed other than Chillwell air. Like a bird in a cage she knew nothing about the delights of the Great Outside.

Mary and I were too pleased with the appearance of Chillwell to probe below her surface. We accepted appearances, and I went to Chillwell, and lit the Chillwell *Lamp*.

CHILLWELL, Coldblast County, Massachusetts, is self-billed, "The Navel of the Commonwealth."

It is n't anywhere near the middle of the State. It may be a part of the left lung of Massachusetts, but the "Navel of the Old Bay State," never! I'll not contest its lung-rights, for does n't the lung pollute the air that unwittingly enters it?

Chillwell by nature, and in no other way, is elevated several hundred feet above the sea of modesty, and rests upon seventeen hills and their accompanying valleys. In my Chillwell days sixty thousand people ate, slept, gossiped, and fought within her zigzag borders, and Chillwell was growing in population, and in the business that population brings, — rapidly growing commercially and in residents, but in no other way.

The head manufacturer of self-satisfaction and puritanical bigotry once received an order for many millions of tons of absolutely pure, super-concentrated conceit, of the brand of respectable cussedness. For a year

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he refused all other business, and his infernal chemists and back-biting hell-ishers worked overtime to fill the commission. The entire product was consigned to Chillwell, arrived there under seal, and was equally distributed among her inhabitants. The worst makes of Massachusetts conservatism were boiled, baked, and fried, till few soothing-drops of liberality remained.

The result, thoroughly seasoned and kiln-dried, became the principal constituent in the composition of Chillwell's microscopic welcome to the stranger who walked in his sleep long enough to irresponsibly cross her barbed-wire boundaries. All the dry bones, all the omission faults, all the bad, and none of the good, of New England exclusiveness seemed to meet in Chillwell, and to stay there.

Chillwell was representative of mossy old-fashionedness, lifeless conservatism, superlative hoggishness, and intensified conceit, — aggregations of houses, and of meeting-houses, where the "other fellow" was preached at, and the stranger was lucky to get hold of two pinched fingers of frozen welcome.

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Chillwell's irreligiousness, which she hypocritically labelled religion, was "me first, and you afterwards, and no matter about the afterwards." On her church mats, above her church chancels, over her family board, hung one motto: "God bless you, confound you."

Chillwell was satisfied to have God do all the good-doing, and she let God do it all. Her piety consisted of nodding nods of approval to the Creator, — not her Creator, for she created herself.

In her own little pot she steeped her daily tea from the dregs of the dimmest past, and woe be to him who dared drop a new leaf into her bitter brewing.

Save in more business, in more people, in more shelters to house her inhabitants, in a few unavoids such as street-cars, Chillwell progressed at the rate of one-half a jot per decade.

Chillwell was a great big over-grown town in kilts. Here the moss and rust of arrogance and educated ignorance played the niggardly game of social riot, with no winners, and with the losers taking turns at tying. Chillwell was a cheat. She seemed to be all she was n't.

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Her beautiful residences, her shaded streets, her garden parks, her business, her meeting-houses, her people's clothes fooled the stranger, and fooled me.

Chillwell had all the outside ear-marks of a delightful compromise between unhealthy metropolitanism and tiresome rurality. She seemed the ideal home-town. Upon her face beamed the perpetual smile of apparent welcome, and back of that smile, that hypocritical grin, there was not a drop of red blood — no heart; not even a ray of kindly light.

Chillwell's heart was as nerveless as an iron pump, and her good-will was as shallow as a painted smile. Sufficient unto herself was Chillwell sufficiency. The dust of her pride blinded her eyes, and she stumbled over her conceit.

Each of her families lived in its own self-built or leased feudality, and there the head and his wallowed in self-satisfaction, connected with their fellows by water-pipe and sewer, grocery-clerk and butcher-boy. There was no fraternity and no good-will in circulation; patriotism was nine parts conceitedness, and brotherly love ninety per cent alloy.

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Chillwell's imposing steeples, on imposing foundations, pointed the way Chillwell was n't going. Her home-houses were but headquarters for the spawning of selfishness and for what selfishness stands for.

All Chillwell played at the game of gossip, played it by day and played it by night, and her gossiping grounds were never vacant, for each player followed close to the one before him, and in continuity each, with his viperous stick, kept the ball of trouble in constant motion. Chillwell was in civil war, neighbor against neighbor, street against street, store against store, church against church, — an everlasting battle of petty jealousy and personal fighting.

Such was my second adopted home.

Filled with a willingness to help others, as I would have others help me, I had entered Chillwell's gates with great expectations, and with a heart glowing with natural warmth; and there, standing in Chillwell's centre, I had waited for the hand of welcome. It came not.

Willing, in the effervescence of my youthfulness, to go more than half way, yes, to go

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all the way, I reached out both my hands, and as I spun them round I struck at Chillwell's stones and bones that had not life enough in them to even creep toward me.

I sent for Mary. She came. We had an immediate session. Then we adjourned business for a while — a stated period, for Mary never forgot the doing of her duty or mine. Then we met again, and had a business meeting with an after-meeting. We considered and reconsidered, and again reconsidered our reconsiderations. We loved the world then, loved it as children love flowers, and as children we grasped its pricks hunting for its roses.

We love the world now; we shall always love it, for God made it; and the world, made by God, and perverted by man, and growing better or worse as you see it, must reach its God-given perfection even though the mills of its refining must grind for centuries to accomplish it.

Mary and I unanimously voted that as Chillwell knew not the feeling of the open hand she should feel the clinched fist. But I would not strike her with bare knuckles; it

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would be with the velvet fist, the covered fist of premeditation, but the fist just the same.

My money was in Chillwell, — put there for the mutual benefit of Chillwell and myself. Chillwell had fooled me by deceit; by misrepresentation she had brought me within her borders; she had robbed me. By force Chillwell should be compelled to return to me my own, and I would take experience for interest.

The working out of my life's work, the beginning of the realization of my ambitions, were, by necessity, postponed. Until I got my money back — for the money was mine, and I needed it — it would be a matter of business, of business as cold-blooded as was Chillwell's chivalry. I had invested in her frozen banks, and I would draw against my deposit until the last mill had left her ice-bound coffers.

I gave Chillwell what she wanted, — not what she needed, — a social paper, which pleased her and disgusted me.

The *Lamp* burned for Chillwell, and for nobody else. It illuminated her conceit, it praised her ignorance, it flattered her society.

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The *Lamp* shed few rays of intellectual light. It was filled with namby-pamby editorials, wishy-washy news, thin-air stories, and literary poppycock. It had forty-eight pages, and was printed upon heavy paper from brand new type. It was like the modiste's creation — all outside. Chillwell was proud of it, and Chillwell bought it, and read it, and clipped from it, and mailed it to her neighbors. From every standpoint, save that of intrinsic merit, the *Lamp* was a gigantic success.

Every Wednesday I leaned out of my editorial window and laughed at Chillwell. She was paying me for making an ass of myself for her pleasure.

The more asinine the *Lamp* was, the more she liked it, and the more she read it, and the more she patronized it.

“Tell me what the people read, and I will tell you what they are.” If you would know Chillwell, see her in the rays of the *Lamp*.

XXVI

EVERYTHING about the *Lamp* was dedicated to the great middle stratum of society, or, rather, what is called society; to the betwixes and the betweenes, the unblooded, the apers, the copiers, the want-to-be-ers, — the folks striving for what they'll never arrive at, the people that some folks call fools, others call snobs, but called sensibles by nobody.

This class, or grade, comprised one hundred and ten per cent of Chillwell's population, barring not exceeding seventeen genuine Blue-Blooders, the working people, and some real folks sandwiched in between. I advise the mathematician who objects to my arithmetic to go to Chillwell. The infallibility of figures will receive its first shock.

The *Lamp* did n't shine for all. It shone for most all of Chillwell, because most all of Chillwell — so much of Chillwell that generally speaking one might have said all of Chillwell — was representative of the undesirable elements of what is known as alleged respectability.

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The *Lamp* began right — right for Chillwell. It settled in Chillwell's swellest building — two flights up, take the mahogany-lined elevator.

The business office and cash drawer occupied eight hundred square feet of hardwood floor — cherry roll-top desks, and counters, with rugs and silver-plated water-cooler.

The editorial room was a dream in pink — silk curtains, pedestal lamps, upholstered sofas and divans, potted plants, and a manuscript chute. It looked like the reception room of a Twenty-third Street manicure. It broke the sanctum furnishing record.

The composing room was carpeted, the stands and cases were enamelled, the imposing stones rested on gilt-edged stanchions, the benzine was in a cut-glass barber's bottle with hand-painted front and back. Beside the foreman's copy-stand, stood an onyx tabled flower-pot, daily filled with scent-slinging flowers.

Adjoining the office was the *Lamp's* reception room, entirely distinct from the business department. Here a maid-in-blue, white-capped, pretty enough to please the men and

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obliging enough to suit the women (I beg your pardon, I should have said ladies, because there were few women in Chillwell), took your hat, poured lemonade for you, handed you a free copy of the *Lamp*, and waited on you in every way that ingenuity and training could suggest.

Copies of the Great Masters of Literature rested upon a rosewood table, and I never saw them do anything save lie there; but they gave a literary atmosphere and brought literature nearer to the callers than it ever came before.

The furnishings were boisterously magnificent. Perhaps Mr. Spencer would n't approve of "boisterously," but Mr. Spencer did n't live in Chillwell, and he had never visited the *Lamp's* reception parlor.

There was over-doneness in every corner. In the centre was a fountain lamp, a sort of indoor light-house, shooting up from the middle of a gold-fishy lake, and from out of its miniature windows marbled angels let perfumed moisture slide between their outstretched fingers. The lamp at the top was always lighted, and a shifting shade

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kept "Welcome" ever going round and round.

There was a cloak-room, a lavatory, and a free-checking-box. Here the *Lamp* did for money what it pretended to do for love.

The whole affair, from type-case to parlor, was clear and sheer poppycock, fancy fixings to appeal to the vagaries of fashionable folly. The reception room idea caught instantly. Its brand of shoddyism just tickled Chillwell's palate. As it was n't really any good, it appeared to be mighty good.

A day or two after I was settled, and really felt at home in my office, my old friend, the business manager of the *Wanderer* called upon me. As he entered my business office he paused in astonishment.

"Whew!" he exclaimed. But his "whew" was mild compared with the adjectives he fired at me after he had viewed my reception room.

"Newson, old boy," said he, as he slapped me on the back, "you're a wonder. If you ever get out of a job, and there is n't a place for you on the *Wanderer*, let me know, and if I'm rich enough, I'll estab-

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lish a chair of 'Impressions' in one of the big universities, and you shall have the job for life."

I had a board of twenty editors — one under pay, nineteen purely honorary.

My paid editor was a genius. He knew Chillwell from the City Hall to her most outside fence. He was born in Chillwell, had always lived in Chillwell, and knew no other city before Chillwell.

He held his finger on the local pulse, and felt the beatings of what was supposed to be the Chillwell heart. He was as well acquainted with Jones as he was with Smith, and he knew to a half dot why Jones didn't like Smith, and why Smith hated Jones.

He carried in convenient storage, ready for immediate use, the correct initials of every man, woman, and child in Chillwell, and he could recall the full names of half of their antecedents.

He was an all-around fellow, and could write on music as easily and as rapidly as he could turn out locals. His experience included the drama, art, literature, science, ministers' meetings, church fairs, caucuses,

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parties, festivals, funerals, and marriages, and he always spelled the names correctly.

He had but one fault, a terrible disease, for which there is no antidote, toxine, serum, or cure, save rope, gun, or electric chair — he wrote poetry, and he's writing it yet, sometimes under protection, more often on the firing line. Barring this out, he was the best "loop" writer in Chillwell.

He did the pen and ink work, while I schemed and planned circulation onslaughts and other paper-builders. The combination was a winner. The *Lamp* did n't flicker, it shone for profit.

XXVII

IN those days I was a fraternity man. When just past my majority I began to join, — to become a Mason, a Knight of Pythias, an Odd Fellow, a Red Man, a Knight of Honor, and a half-dozen other assorted Knights and Nighters.

With a pocket full of transfer cards, demits, and deposit slips, I moved into the inner chambers of Chillwell's secret houses. It cost a lot, — more than it was worth in Chillwell, because most of Chillwell's organized fraternity was only a fading shade better than Chillwell itself.

Some of Chillwell's lodge rooms were nests of vituperation, where fraternity and brotherly love were confined to the parchment charter-rolls, glass-barred into their frames. Chillwell's fraternities often hung their sentiments on their dead walls to die.

As a guest, I might have received two and a half fingers of refrigerated welcome; as a member, I sat on a cake of ice, while ice-sitters shivered about me in the frozen air. The lodge-members went through their rit-

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uals, repeated the grand old lines of fellow-love and constant watchfulness, with the animation of a court-crier — all waiting for the go-home gavel; and when it fell, like sheep they filed into the coat-room, and homeward went their ways as silent as Government clerks at a stand-up lunch counter.

Visitation days the high officials and their staffs came in furs, accompanied by open-grate burners, to set in front of their official chairs, the only glow of warmth anywhere about. Chillwell's active fraternity was as limp as the stuffing of a chocolate éclair.

The *Lamp* made its deposits in the Thirty-Seventh National Bank — up one flight, turn to the left, walk softly, speak in a Chillwell whisper through a muffler.

I had a big deposit in those days, when Chillwell's banks paid interest on daily balances of one hundred dollars. The president of the Thirty-Seventh National Bank of Chillwell was mechanically glad to see me.

With stereotyped cordiality he asked me to call next day, for by that time he expected to be able to obtain a special license from his board of directors permitting him to

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shake with a full hand and to unbend to within ten degrees of the line of real welcome. He once had been a mighty good fellow, and had drifted into Chillwell as I had, and some of his pores of good fellowship were not permanently clogged.

I asked the president about the financial standing of the local merchants — the fellows who were advertising in the *Lamp*. With the utmost frankness he spoke well of all who deposited in his bank, and the opposite of the chaps who misguidedly cast their cash elsewhere.

I crossed the street, and talked with the president of the Thirty-Eighth National Bank, and he told me all about all the bad things possessed by the folks who did business with the Thirty-Seventh National Bank.

It was impossible to truly gauge a man, for he was just as bad in one shop, or in one bank, as he was good in another.

I wanted a stenographer, an every-day stenographer, an eight-or-nine-dollar-a-week young woman. I heard of one. I liked her looks, and was disposed to engage her. As she left my office, the occupant of the next

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room entered. He and the young woman knew each other. They even shook hands and exchanged courtesies.

"Know her?" I interrogated, when she had gone.

"Yes," he replied.

"I'm thinking of hiring her."

"Don't."

"Why not?"

"Well," he said mysteriously, "I don't think she's just the kind of girl you want."

"Anything against her character?"

"I don't want to say there is."

"Speak out, man."

After a deal of urging, I found that all he knew against the girl was that a friend of his had told an acquaintance that a clerk across the street from the store she used to work in had said that he knew some one who claimed to have seen her with a man from another town, who, it was alleged, was married or had been married.

Seven men applied for the position of assistant foreman. I practically decided upon one. I telephoned to the printing office he formerly worked for.

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"Yes, we know him," was the answer to my inquiry.

"Is he a good printer?" I inquired.

"Well, I guess so," came the hesitating answer.

"Honest?"

"Yes, but —"

Try as I would, I could n't get the answer to go beyond the "but." He stuck to and at the "but." There was n't any one, from the president of the biggest bank to the conductor of a street-car, who could give a clean bill of reference. When anything good was said of anybody, it was almost invariably followed by a mysterious "but," which usually did n't stand for anything except rank cussedness on the part of the "butter."

Chillwell may have had a board of trade. Probably she did, but if she had one, it was hidden somewhere, for I never saw it.

Not far from the *Lamp's* office stood People's Hall, a great big, galleried, barny sort of an affair, dedicated to political riot and to more or less musical harmony.

Here Chillwell's Annual Musical Jubilee was held.

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This function was Chillwell's top-most pride.

She talked about it, and she bragged about it, and she did everything save enthusiastically support it.

Chillwell's Musical Jubilee Committee was a good buyer of melody, and the programme, for the most part, was filled by outsiders of a pretty good quality. Generally the hall was more than two thirds full, and occasionally every seat was sold, or taken, if Chillwell's neighbors came to the rescue.

Musical Chillwell — a little company of perhaps twenty-seven families; I'll make it twenty-nine for liberality's sake — really appreciated Chillwell's Musical Jubilee; but alleged musical Chillwell made the Jubilee a social event, slept through most of its numbers, and rubbed its eyes at a "rag-time" encore.

The widow of the late Senator Slip was the local patroness of all musical things. She inherited music. Her ears rang with it, or at least with something, for she had a ringing in her ears. Her great, great grandfather sang in the choir, and her father's

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father had worked in an organ factory. She originated what was known as "a Monthly Musical Mixture," the sessions of which were held at her house and at other commodious residences.

I attended one of them. I shall never forget my experiences. Arrayed in inharmounious gowns, Chillwell's maids and matrons gathered in gossipy groups. There was a substantial collation, with incidental music.

"I do just all the time and every day dote on music," said a next-to-waistless damsel between her sandwich munchings.

I made a meaningless and acceptable reply. Later on, I remarked,

"Do you enjoy Chopin's chops?"

"They are delicious," replied the sweet sitter.

Did she see my joke, or did n't she? Did she take me seriously, or did she answer me in my own badinage? I shall never know.

The *Lamp* gave a page a week to musical matters, not because its constituents read them, but because its readers wanted something musical in the house. Every woman with a piano used to turn to that page, and

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occasionally read its headings. It was edited by a soda-water clerk, who made a specialty of giving more foam to the glass than any other local dispenser of syrupy gas.

The matter was unadulterated rot, in which were interjected the names of the Old Masters and whole chunks of foreign made-overs. Occasionally the *Lamp* condescendingly spoke of American music and musicians, but very seldom, for Chillwell's musicians, as they ran, knew too little of music to appreciate anything which had n't passed through the Custom House.

The small-sized deposit box in which was stored Chillwell's genuine love for music offered its front half for rent.

Chillwell claimed to be literary. Ask the proprietors of her book-stores about it. Every time any one bought other than a paper-covered volume, the storekeepers ran out flags, and the forty-year-old banners were as good as new.

But Chillwell had her literary clubs, with their luncheons of veal salad and sediment coffee, where females in stays and corseted men read sections of what they did n't know

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about the writers their hearers had never heard of. These soirées gave the talkers a chance to discharge their encyclopedic load, and their audiences opportunity to think they thought.

The *Lamp* fairly sweat imitation literature. Its scissors sizzled with the gush of sloppy sketch, irrelevant review, and sappy story. I subscribed for the leading foreign journals, and whenever I ran across matter of no interest, and of no use, to anybody, I pounced upon it, re-headed it, penned a scarlet introduction, and gave it to Chillwell. As few read it, and as none understood it, it was a taker. It looked "tony;" that was enough. Chillwell wanted appearances, and I gave them to her in allopathic doses.

XXVIII

THAT I might establish some sort of a journalistic recognition among my out-of-town fellows, I occasionally wrote some semi-solid stuff. That it was n't entirely devoid of quality was evidenced by the fact that it was frequently quoted from by my esteemed contemporaries. I ran a column a week of original pennings under the heading of "Whole or Half Truths." They were appreciated outside of Chillwell. Here are a few of them. Between ourselves, let me say that I have selected the best ones. All of the rest are worse, many of them much worse:

"Some folks ought to take their consciences out once in a while for exercise."

"Oddity is n't always the surplus of genius."

"Civilization's Trinity: Godliness, Cleanliness, Progressiveness."

"Fashion's the Devil's First-Assistant."

"The fellow who objects to discipline needs it the most."

"The optimist has an easy time of it — he smiles while others work."

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"You can inherit ability, but you've got to hustle for experience."

"The Rock of Success is n't located in a field of roses."

"Better be single in peace than married in war."

"The lazy churchman is always conservative."

"Silence is n't always golden. The talker with something to say is worth a dozen keep-stills."

"Until we are reckoned for what we are, the Arithmetic of Justice will be full of misprints."

"Kick, and the world kicks at you, but you may not kick in vain."

"The optimist who thinks that folks are civilized should yell 'Fire!' to a crowded house, and watch results."

"'A gentleman' is too often the snob's title for a do-nothing, a fellow about town, a tailor-made loafer, a confidence shark, or a society stalk. Be a man."

"There's altogether too much restfulness in respectability."

"A conservative is a wall-flower specimen of humanity too cowardly to be on the firing line."

"It does n't cost anything to say 'Good-morning,' even if it's raining."

"The battle of the mind does n't make widows."

"Better be conceited and know something than be humble in ignorance."

"The best advice some of us can give is, 'Do as we don't.'"

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“Experience without theory is like an axle without grease.”

“Killing time is intellectual suicide.”

“Some men may doubt other men’s interpretation of God, but no real man ever doubts God.”

“Better be yourself unless you are sure you can successfully be somebody else.”

“Most of our war patriotism is in favor of having somebody else bravely stand up and be shot at.”

“You can’t civilize the fellow who does n’t care.”

“Take sense and medicine in proper doses.”

“A high collar and a high intellect don’t often have the same neck.”

“An ounce of Christianity is worth a pound of law.”

“The best men are known by the quality of their friends and the quantity of their enemies.”

“The loafer never knows the restfulness of being healthfully tired.”

“Know one thing well, and know how to find out about everything else.”

“Poets are public-heart-stirrers ; they get the world out of its every-day self, and lift it into what it would be if the world’s pocket-book and the world’s heart changed places.”

When I suggested this department to my city editor, he was much opposed to its establishment.

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“Mr. New,” he said, “don’t think I don’t appreciate the intrinsic value of it, but Chillwell folks won’t like it. If you write any stuff like that you’ve just shown me, you are sure to make enemies. Better not risk it.”

“Stillman,” I said, “you may be right, but I think you’re dead wrong.”

“I think I’m right,” he replied. “Let me cite a case. The *Herald* tried something like it, a year or more ago, and they gave it up.”

“Have you any of the *Herald’s* stuff?”

“Think I’ve got some in my desk. I’ll see.”

In a few moments he returned with some clippings. I glanced over them.

“Stillman,” I said, “the *Herald’s* stuff is different from the stuff I propose to stuff our columns with. They call names. That won’t do. You can call Mr. General People anything you want to, from a liar to a horse-thief, provided you don’t print his name. Take the meanest man in Chillwell, and locate him in some other town, and then tell the truth about him. He’s the last man in the world to see himself in it.”

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"Well," he said, "I suppose you'll do as you please, as you usually do, but I'm not convinced that it is good policy."

"I will take the responsibility," I answered, and I did.

One day, after I had been running the column for a few weeks, my city editor came to me, and, after choking a little and trying to raise a blush upon his hairless cheek, he said, semi-seriously:

"Mr. New, you're right about that 'Whole and Half Truths' column of yours. It's making a hit. I did n't believe it, and I did n't want to, but I've got to give in. You know that item you wrote about a special brand of hypocrite?"

"Yes," I replied. "I think I recall it."

"You had Old Cheatem in mind, did n't you?"

I nodded.

"Well, I saw him to-day, and the first thing he said to me was, 'Stillman, there's lots of bright things in the *Lamp*. That 'Whole and Half Truths' column is mighty interesting. Say, but that editor of yours is an independent fellow, does n't care what he

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says, just as lief hit anybody as not, would n't he? I know who that hypocrite is. He lives just where New says he does — ten miles up north, and he's a darned sight meaner cuss than the paper said he was. I cut that item out, and mailed it to him. Hope it 'll do him good."

I laughed.

My city editor smiled, with the remark, "You ain't so old as I am, but you're great at sizing up. Here, take a cigar — it's on me this time."

XXIX

CHILLWELL was a meeting-house city. Nowhere else in the whole wide world, all of New England included, were there so many church buildings and such large congregations.

The churches were indiscriminately located. They were between the business blocks, in double clusters around the City Hall, bordered the parks, and were as thick as drug stores in the residential sections. If going to meeting constitutes churchmen and churchwomen, every Chillweller was a churchman.

Everybody, for custom's sake, for duty's sake, or for the sake of something else, regularly attended Sunday services.

An unwritten, yet rigidly enforced, local law made it next to a criminal offence for any Chillwell man to remain for thirty days in town without an imported or locally made long-tailed Sunday suit — Prince Albert style preferred; and every Chillwell woman, whether server or servee, owned, free and clear, at least one irreligious costume, to be worn on Sundays only, and to be considered

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socially unfit for exhibition outside of the church.

Sunday dress was a distinct part of Sunday worship.

Once upon a time, so tradition says, a bold, bad, wicked, independent, and fearless sort of a woman, on a very hot, sultry, sweltering, perspirey midsummer's day, actually, deliberately, and with full realization of her action, went to church unarrayed in her Sunday garment. She wore a loose-fitting muslin, and was comfortable. It took her ten years to regain her church and social position. The crime she had committed deserved its punishment, for was it not listed in Chillwell's church catalogue of criminal corruption?

If Chillwell had n't been the very birth-place of conservatism and of machine-made piety of a brand making it impossible for it to do anything which had not been done before, I verily believe that there would have been a Chillwell edition of Holy Writ, illustrated with fashion plates, and that all of the Prophets would have been pictured as tailors fitting robes and halos of prevailing styles. Chillwell's irreligious religion was

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in somewhat unintentional consistency with churchy piety, for if it were but clothes-deep, it was certainly appropriate for her to carry the imitation upon her back.

Apparently, Chillwell kept its Sabbath. Even the barber shops were closed, and everywhere, save in Chillwell's kitchens, was the laxitude of the counterfeit of Sabbath observance. But the drafts of the cooking stoves were wide open, and the servants broke the fourth commandment under the command of their church-going masters and mistresses.

And the lid was off the white-wash vats, and the white-washers worked over-time, for white-wash was a commodity — a Sunday commodity — and without it there would have been no Sunday in Chillwell.

Pure goodness was lonesome.

Chillwell's meeting-houses represented every architectural and non-architectural style, class, and type. Some were box-square from walls to pews, and others were outwardly grand and inwardly dark and appropriate to the diffusion of the gloomy theology which dared not show itself in the Gospel's kindly light.

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All but a few of Chillwell's churches sold their alleged worshipping space by real-estate methods; and many of the pew-sellings were exhilarated by land-booming ways. Once a year the pulpits were turned into auction blocks, and a popular auctioneer, or some other fellow who knew how to say "Going, going, gone!" in an enticing way, knocked down the piety seats to the highest bidders.

Every one in Chillwell, in church and out of it, was reckoned for what he was worth in dollars and clothes, and there were few other legal tenders.

Chillwell's ministers, for the most part, were school-scholars, phonographic-lecturers, educated pulpiters, intentional plagiarists of the encyclopedia and history. Their sermons were mostly combinations of words, harmoniously worked together in endless curves and chains without a protruding point; which read well, sounded well, and offended nobody. There was seldom love or truth in them unless it occurred by accident; and when it did inadvertently happen, the sorrowful preacher made a round of apologetic calls

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upon his middle-pew parishioners, to make his peace with Money.

Most of the Chillwell clergymen were engaged to preach two sermons, and to attend one prayer meeting, a week; to visit each pew-holder as often as once a year, and to drive in the prescribed road staked for them by the majority of dollars; and they were under bond not to go outside of the policy of their constituents. Their prayers, as well as their sermons, were addressed to their audiences.

They never spoke unfavorably of the Bible, nor did they fail to criticise the devil. They talked of sin in general, but seldom did they speak of it in particular. Their money came from the centre-sitters, and they were true to their masters.

But there was one exception. There may have been more than one, but I ran across only one.

Parson Bright, of the Thirteenth Church, was a man. Every inch of him and every ounce of him was dedicated to the Living God. His home was the breeding-place of virtue, his daily life a battle for truth, his pulpit the stand of honor. He came to Chill-

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well, as I came, with honest expectation, believing Chillwell to be representative of New England progression and puritanical sturdiness, but sufficiently modernized to meet the development of American times.

He was an ever-running brook of sparkling life. His God was everywhere, and he found Him out of the church as well as in it. He loved man, because he loved God. He loved God, because he loved man. His heart beat for the whole world. He would not save man wholly, by pulling him through the cramped refineries of the church. He would make men of men, for when he made them men he saved them. He would use the church as a means to a civilized end. He would make his pulpit the Forum of Progression, — a progression broad enough to take in all men, a progression founded upon Brotherly Love and dedicated to the Eleventh Commandment.

Every Sunday he preached to a full house, a house full of ladies and gentlemen, with a few men and women scattered in between. His sermons were effervescent with life, fervent in religion, strong in logic, strenuous in

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practicability, and they should have brought tears and cheers, but they seldom raised the semblance of a ripple or the hesitation of an eyebrow.

Men in broadcloth, and women in silk, with open eyes saw nothing, and with open ears heard nothing. If they held a hymn-book and rose and fell at specified times, it sufficed them. Pure eloquence, fairly scintillating with brotherly love and Christ-like charity, bubbling as a spring from a love-motored heart, struck the dead walls of Chillwell and hurled itself back to its giver in mocking echoes.

XXX

I CLEARLY remember an evening in Doctor Bright's study. While we were enjoying an animated game of conversation, with neither winning, there came a knock at the door.

"Come in," called the pastor.

The door opened, and an old, bent-over, white-haired, and wrinkled-cheeked man entered.

I recognized him at once. He was one of Chillwell's richest inhabitants. He owned a big factory, and enjoyed the revenue from the work of a thousand men and women, who, in unventilated and unsanitary buildings, earned what he took as toll.

"Pow'ful good sermon, that of yourn last Sunday," he said.

"I'm very glad it impressed you," responded the pastor, modestly.

"Touched me deeper than I ever got touched afore."

"You make me happy, my brother," said the clergyman, as the tears glistened in his eyes.

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“ I ’ve ’bout made up my mind to jine the church.”

“ What!” exclaimed Doctor Bright, and then realizing that this was not the time to show surprise, he reached for the other’s hand and gave it a hearty shake. “ Can it be possible,” thought he, “ that I am about to pick the first fruit of my labors?”

“ Say, not so fast,” protested the visitor; “ I want to ask yer some questions fust.”

“ Well?”

“ Is jinin’ the church goin’ to get in the way of business? If I ’m a churchman, has I got to do differently than I ’ve been a-doin’?”

I looked at my friend, the pastor. I studied his face. Across it I read his thoughts as though his very soul were a lantern-slide and his face the picture-sheet.

“ My dear sir,” he said, and his voice rang with emphatic sincerity, “ you can join the Thirteenth Church and do as you please, for there are on its membership roll men whose reputations are many shades darker than yours; but you cannot be a member of the Church of the Living God and continue to

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do as I know you have done, and as every man in Chillwell knows you are doing.”

The old hypocrite looked at his pastor, and his face grew livid. He started to say something, but did n't. He tried again, but the words would n't come. In desperation, he rose from his chair, bolted through the door, and he has never been seen in church since.

His absence from services, and the cutting off of his pew rent and donations, required and received an explanation.

It was generally conceded by the officers and members of the church that the pastor had made a consummate ass of himself. All the good he had done, all his eloquence, all his magnetism, all his purity, and all his loving-kindness were forgotten, because he had punctured the church's gold-plated pillar by hurling at it the javelin of truth. The Reverend Doctor Bright had been honest at the expense of expediency.

Whether my friend, Doctor Bright, was right as often as I was, or whether I was wrong as often as he was, are questions which neither of us care to settle. Right or wrong, Doctor Bright was right in conscience. We

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differed, and many an evening we spent together discussing the essentials and semi-essentials of life, each giving to the other without himself losing by the giving.

“Doctor,” I said, one evening, “a dozen people joined the Twelfth Church last Sunday. The auditorium was crowded. Hardly an eye was in its normally dry condition, and violent sobs were heard in every direction. Why did they cry? Is n’t it a good thing to add one’s name to the roll of professed Christians?”

“Does n’t the solemnity of the occasion suggest it?” he responded.

“Granted, but the converted sinner is a winner, a victor. He has fought sin, and he has won the battle.”

“Go on, you interest me.”

“When a victorious admiral comes sailing home, we don’t sob over his arrival. We cheer, and the bands get together and make hilarious melody. Cannons boom, flags go up, folks smile and laugh and shout, and everybody is happy, and shows it.”

I felt the Doctor’s eyes upon me. I continued:

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“Here are a dozen victors over sin, conquerors of themselves. Their victories are publicly announced. Not a flag goes up, not a smile is smiled, not a note of joyful music sounds. Like halter-tied criminals they march to the chancel, and like wooden men assent to the mechanically put statements, while their friends cry and sob and act like a pack of condolers who have been permitted to come to see their beloved ones executed.”

The Doctor said nothing.

“No wonder,” I cried, “that some thinking men, filled to the brim with Christian nobility, have no wish to stand up and be sobbed at in the dim, irreligious light of a cobwebbed meeting-house when they publicly announce their alliance to the God of Sunshine and the God of Joy. While angels are singing in Heaven, the churches are crying on earth, and the sinner falters up the aisle and joins in the sorrowful sob for his salvation.”

Doctor Bright remained silent for several minutes, while I waited for his reply. Then he put his arms affectionately about my shoulders.

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“Newson,” he began. His voice fell. He could n’t proceed for a while. With an effort he brought himself together.

“My boy, my boy,” he said, softly, “may the good Lord pry open my eyes till I can see broadly enough to interpret the meaning of these unbridled words of yours, which, whether they be of truth or not, cut like arrows into the quick of my intelligence.”

The Reverend Doctor Bright was rapidly reaching his intellectual majority.

This grand man is not in Chillwell now. He would have stayed could he have saved a dozen, could he have made a microscopic part of Chillwell better and purer and nobler. He went, as all good men feel impelled to go, to a place where there is opportunity. The fool alone struggles against the inevitable. The wise man never continues to push his strength against an unmovable obstacle.

Every Chillwell church had a big Sunday-school, where modern irreligion was ground and fed to its inmates, where children were taught the technique and not the love of the Bible, where youth were made into churchy automatons, trained to laugh, and cry, and

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jump, and sleep, and do something or nothing, at each pull of the ecclesiastical string.

Mechanical teachers presided over Chillwell youth, and fed it with salt without a savor, and didn't see that their little ones hungered and thirsted for the Bread and Water of Life.

As in many another place in New England, especially in the Old Bay State, Chillwell's Sunday-schools were kept up in membership by Christmas-trees, picnics, excursions, and the other methods which give apparent size to statistics.

The Reverend Mister Weller, an ex-army chaplain, came to Chillwell. He was a Harvard man, a Yale post-graduate, and had a foreign education as an additional asset. He descended from an unbroken line of uninvestigated ancestry. He had a social pull, a family pull, and a pull altogether. His cousin, the Reverend Doctor Proper, presided over Chillwell's biggest church, with a preachery occupying the front street and two corners, a swell front in front, a swell back in back, and stained-glass swellers on both sides of it.

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The Reverend Mister Weller was introduced by the Reverend Doctor Proper to an aristocratic congregation. He appeared in full uniform, and made the biggest hit ever permitted in Chillwell. He was a magnetic speaker, spoke extemporaneously, and his words were freighted with silver-plated logic. During the first few of his evangelistic services, he didn't attempt to attack other than the regular prescribed sins of the world. Boldly he struck at them, and his words seemed to fall like sledge-hammer blows upon the sinner from without, and not to touch the sinner within. His brain, not his conscience, chased the devil, with the devil a lap ahead.

But there came a change. The real man in him began to exert itself. He seemed as though struck by the lightning of truth, and his whole soul blazed with the intensity of the electricity of righteousness. He forgot himself, forgot his constituents, forgot convention, forgot expediency, and as one clothed in the armor of manliness, he stood in that aristocrat pulpit and introduced the unpainted and unvarnished truth to a people who

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were unacquainted with it. One could almost see the gray hairs of his respectable relative, Parson Proper, whiten, and the audience perceptibly pale. He had taken them unawares. Their surprise was too great to allow them to formulate immediate action. They were dazed; but the next day their corrupted senses returned to them. The church fathers of the Church of the Golden Coin, and the church fathers of all the other cash churches, got together and framed the following resolutions:

“*Resolved*, That we, the Christian men and women of Chillwell, while appreciating the marvellous eloquence of our dear brother, the Reverend Mister Weller, are constrained to believe that the work so auspiciously begun by him can to advantage be extended to other fields; and, therefore, it is further

“*Resolved*, That we, the Christian men and women of Chillwell, out of consideration for the welfare of our neighboring brothers and sisters, recommend that our dear brother discontinue his productive services and allow our beloved pastors to continue the work so enthusiastically begun by him.”

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The Reverend Mister Weller left Chillwell, and he has not been seen there since. No other man like him has attempted to awaken Chillwell's sleeping piety. Once, rumor says, a bold, brave Christian knocked at the church gates of Chillwell. He was examined by a committee of caution and refused a permit to enter. The sample sermon he presented for examination was astride the danger line of truth.

The *Lamp* printed extracts from Chillwell's Sunday sermons. They were typographically filling, and there was nothing in them to offend. They were certainly harmless in commission, however harmful they may have been in omission. They pleased their composers, and advertised the *Lamp*.

XXXI

CHILLWELL was a home-house-town. Mark you, I said "home-house-town," not "home-town." Few outsiders were unfortunate enough to move into Chillwell, and few Chillwellers were fortunate enough to move out of it. Chillwell home-bred her population. Save for the foreigners, Chillwell folks were Chillwell-born. They did n't come into the town voluntarily, and somehow few of them got out of it into the wider world. Why they stayed, nobody knows. Judging by the way the people talked against Chillwell, and by the way they talked against each other, nobody was proud of Chillwell, nobody liked the city, and nobody liked anybody save himself and incidentally his family.

Save for the foreigners and the hand-workers, everybody in Chillwell was in society. The real Blue-Bloods—if there is any such thing as a Blue-Blood—were limited to a dozen families, which lived by themselves, associated together, helped nature to uptwist their noses, condescendingly

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bowed to a few of their neighbors, and regretted that they were obliged to feed upon common market meat and eat of the flour which fed their inferiors.

Some of the Blue-Bloods had money, and some of them did n't have anything except inheritance. There was n't a good-looking one in the lot. Some of them were mentally spavined, physically lean and lank, and they were generally stocked with unused education — book-talkers in whom the fire of life had not been kindled.

Between the Blue-Bloods and the working-classes there were thousands of grades of society, — a separate and distinct class for nearly every family, with occasionally a half-dozen families to a class. There were few who considered themselves as representatives of the great middle class, the class which holds the key to Civilization's gate, the class which does the bulk of all the work in the world, the class without which there would be no progress.

Those who had ancestors classified themselves by priority of ancestral arrival, and drew the line as close as a week.

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The folks whose forebears struck Chillwell in 1746 outranked the unfortunate whose several-times-great-grandfather arrived in Chillwell a year afterwards; and a ten years' difference lifted a family way beyond speaking acquaintance with their more modern neighbors.

I said that there were only a dozen real Blue-Bloods. I don't know what real Blue-Blood is, and I don't know of anybody who does know. The doctors have probed for it, and have found it not; chemists have searched for it, but their laboratories have never discovered it. But Chillwell has her own definition of it. To her a Blue-Blood is a descendant of a series of descendants, forming a line from the Long Ago up to the Now, with at least every other head of the family a gentlemanly loafer, who did n't do anything, either because he did n't have to, or did n't want to, or did n't know enough to.

Substantially every Chillwell family — barring the working-people, who have sense enough to reckon themselves as they are — that could directly or indirectly trace itself back but a single generation, thought itself

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Blue-Bloody, and claimed to be a Blue-Blood.

The biggest ribbon store in all creation could n't supply one-half as many shades of blue as were carried in regular stock on every Chillwell street.

Few Chillwell families were willing to be considered modern.

Few Chillwell men or women wanted to be reckoned by what they were.

Nearly every one would be a sprig of the Past, a twig of a family-tree branch.

Chillwell's principal agricultural industry was the planting and rearing of family-trees.

Chillwell's library contained thousands of local genealogies. A Me Street building was entirely occupied by genealogy writers.

Ask a Chillwell man about his boys, and he displayed no interest. Ask him about himself, and he was indifferent. Ask him about his ancestors, and you pressed the spring which produced Chillwell's leading form of animation.

The *Lamp* knew its business. Every week I ran a thousand locals, mostly personals.

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I had a bucketful of cap M's and lower case i's, r's, and s's, and prefixed every name with Mr., Mrs., or Miss, or gave it other title if there was one to be had by right or imagination.

I did n't say "John Smith has the mumps," or that "Mrs. John Smith is disposed to be indisposed," or that "Sally Smith has just received her passport permitting her to visit outside of Chillwell." I said, "Mr. John Smith, of Hermitage Avenue, direct lineal descendant of the fourteenth removed John Oliver Cromwell Romulus Remus Smith, whose great-great-grandfather sold a dog to the first Coldblast County settler, has the mumps;" or, "Mrs. John Smith, whose ancestors had to settle for Plot No. 94, Section 100, Coldblast County, gave a Revolutionary Tea, last evening;" or, "Miss Sally Smith, a descendant of fifteen men who were shot during the French Wars, will appear as Pocahontas, at the Mayflower Ball, given for the benefit of the Fund for the Propagation of Family-trees."

The *Lamp* had its own private genealogical library. In it appeared substantially

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every Chillwell family of much or some money.

The *Lamp* made a big hit in adding '07 (for 1707), '28 (for 1728) after the names. For instance, it billed Butcher Blank as "Mr. Benjamin Blank, '04;" the '04 referring to the year of the settlement of his ancestors in Chillwell.

Many families had their ancestral arrival-year set back from fifty to a hundred years, and the *Lamp* backed up the lie at a dollar per lie per year.

A special concession or discount price was made to subscribers to the *Lamp* and to advertisers. Non-advertisers paid double price.

The *Lamp* ran a special genealogical department in connection with a first-class engraver and crest-sketcher. Family-trees were grown to order from the smallest roots, and grafting trunks and branches on stumps was a profitable industry.

The *Lamp* refused to recognize any one without a Past.

Every Chillwell inhabitant had a Past, and most of them had a heap more Past than Present.

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The *Lamp's* genealogical department was under the direction of Professor Search, A.M., Ph.D., LL.D., Litt.D. He was formerly curator of a historical society. Not only did he know books, but he possessed that unusual ability of being able to adapt their contents to suit even the most peculiarly exacting conditions. The professor was the ablest genealogical carpenter and builder of the county. He was wonderfully proficient at job work. He could fan the thinnest ancestral spark into a conflagration. He could build foreign castles with a bundle of American chips. He was an affable fellow, quick at repartee, and everybody liked him. He did n't know how to make an enemy. He was the most expert educated taffy-slinger I ever expect to see. He simply lacked business ability, and therefore could n't command a high salary. This was one of the reasons why he was connected with the *Lamp*.

One day during the absence of my genealogical editor, a well-known marketman and prominent advertiser called at the genealogical department to inquire as to our progress in filling his order.

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“How be yer gettin’ ’long?” he asked.

“Splendidly,” I replied. “Professor Search has shown me the first fifty sheets of your genealogy. I read them with great interest.”

He smiled.

“You have a remarkable ancestry, sir,” I continued. “I have never seen it duplicated.” (Here I told the exact truth, but not as he understood it.)

“But, my dear Mr. Steere,” I said, “I have something very important to tell you. The professor, who you know is the greatest life-searcher in the world, has discovered that one of your great-great-great-grandfathers on your mother’s side got into difficulties with the government and —” I stopped, as this was the opportune time to pause.

I fairly felt my auditor blush. Resuming, I said in my most impressive voice, a quality of tone I had cultivated at great expense for this particular purpose,

“But I assure you that this act of your ancestor will not be known to Chillwell.”

“How did yer fix it?” he inquired anxiously.

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“Professor Search,” I said, with solemnity, “removed this blot from your record.”

“But how air you goin’ to connect, if you leave him out?”

“Oh,” I replied, “nothing is difficult in the hands of so great an expert as the Professor. This ancestor of yours will totally disappear. He will be known as the ‘missing link,’ and a ‘missing link’ is very fashionable nowadays, and I would n’t advise you to be without one.”

XXXII

MARY MAY was one of the literary wicks of the *Lamp*. She still remained in Yarmouth. Every little while my determination to "wait until ready" suffered a relapse. About once a month selfish sentiment fought with my judgment, and temporarily won. When I could spare the time, I rushed to Yarmouth, to return with my better sense in command; or I wrote to Mary an effusive letter. Invariably the reply was filled with "waits," so deliciously put, and so loving in their sentiment, that there was no sting in them. I did n't know then, nor did I know for years afterward, how Mary struggled with herself, and how often tears helped to wash away the sorrow of separation. Because she did n't dare trust herself, she was afraid to show me her whole heart and to tell me of the almost daily struggle of loving preference against stern necessity.

Mary read every word in every issue of the *Lamp*, and each week she returned the extra copy I sent her with marginal notes, criti-

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cising here and praising there. She had the journalistic temperament. Naturally she understood people and conditions. Her criticisms were almost always just, and I seldom went against her judgment. She was an accurate weigher of men and things. At her suggestion, I placed the book reviewing and general literary departments in her hands. She reviewed all the books and current magazines, and contributed many an interesting squib and article. Occasionally she wrote a story, and there was plot and action to it.

In our journalistic work, Mary as well as I, schooled our pens to write expediential matter. Neither of us wrote what we wanted to write, and yet our work was our best work under existing conditions. We labored as faithfully and as strenuously at what we did n't want to do as we would have, had our pens been the instruments of our inner selves, — ink-tracers of our true sentiments.

Miss Susie Steale was the *Lamp's* most patronizing and profitable patroness at large. She was Chillwell's professional philanthropist and angel of notoriety, the daughter of the late Ike Steale, the well-known stock-

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robber, the former widow-wrecker, and general all-round scalawag. Ike died a dozen years ago, and left a dozen millions. Not a tear dropped; there was a big funeral, with curiosity seekers as mourners. The out-of-town newspapers told what he was with commendable exactness. Not a word, not a syllable, in his favor. Kind-hearted people, and those who look up the devil's pedigree, hoping to find something to speak well about, searched in vain with lanterns and microscopes, and not a thing could they find which was n't bad and worse.

Susie was n't prehistoric, and she had n't any social position. She did n't belong to any society, for everybody hated old Steale, and while he lived they hated his children, too. Susie never did any stealing directly. She did n't have to. The old man had attended to that, and he had stolen enough for the whole family; yes, enough for about two thousand families. Susie wanted to be somebody. As a Steale, she had been ostracized by society, respectable and otherwise. She pined for recognition. She had lots of sense, and was a mighty shrewd girl. She knew that she

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could buy hangers-on, and get a paid audience anywhere, but she wanted something else. She wanted folks to seek her, to talk about her, to praise her.

With millions of dollars sweating interest, she found that apparent goodness and public philanthropy would give the most on the dollar. She simply knew how to buy what she wanted at rock-bottom wholesale price. First, she got a close-mouthed secretary, who leaked only on order. Secondly, she secured an organ, a typographical mouthpiece, subsidized to keep her and her doings constantly before the public. Her father never got anything for nothing, and she had sense enough to know that something for nothing was n't worth more than the price paid for it. She came to my office on business, because she meant business.

"Mr. New," she said, as we were closeted in my sanctum, "I know you by reputation, and I feel confident that you will consider what I am about to say with the same confidence that would be given it by my lawyer or my physician, and that it will forever remain with you a sanctum secret."

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I assured her that she could safely trust me with every kind, class, and grade of secret.

With the utmost frankness, and with a thoroughly business-like air, she offered to pay me my regular "pure reading matter" rates for everything which the *Lamp* printed complimentary to her and to her work; and she further agreed to furnish the matter, which was not to exceed, on the average, two hundred lines a week; and I was to have the right to reject any of it which in my judgment appeared to be too puffy or too self-laudatory. It was not necessary for me to assure her that personal matter lost its savor as soon as it appeared to be other than regular news or comment. Nearly everything she sent me, I would have gladly printed without remuneration. But Susie Steale knew how to run her business. While she knew that substantially everything I printed about her need not have cost her more than the trouble of preparing it, the fact that she paid for it, and at a definite price per line, gave her a security and a certainty which would have been impossible had the matter she sent in been treated as rank-and-file news.

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Miss Steale opened a philanthropy mill, in secret, of course, — that kind of secrecy which folks find when they are told to hunt for it. She put out some paid hunters. Her income was so big that all the charity-giving she could think of could n't affect it. Her first pool was giving poor children Christmas presents at "a dollar fifty-eight" per child. Profit, five thousand lines of advertising, at less than a twentieth of a cent a line. Then she established some hospital beds. Cost, too little to feel. More advertising. She believed in continuity, and kept at it, spending about five per cent of her income doing good and keeping ninety-five per cent. Ninety-five per cent of an excessive income is enough for almost any poor, lone, old-maid woman.

Cousin Tom looked out for her property, and invested it to the public's damage, where it gave the least and brought in the most. But what matter? Was n't she giving five per cent of the income she never earned, buying notoriety at cut rates? No matter if every dividend she received came from the bloodless veins of the poor, or was the "swag" of the stock-board. Every night

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she told the Lord about her five per cent, and every day she advertised it in the newspapers. The papers called her a great philanthropist. Orators heralded her name, and audiences cheered. Ministers, forgetful of the widow's mite, eulogized her from their pulpits; but somehow I think that she didn't keep Heaven's bookkeeper busy entering real deeds of charity.

Susie Steale was fooling the people, but she was n't fooling the Lord. Her treasures on earth were not negotiable in Heaven. The little she did with the much she had was but an infinitesimal part of her responsibility. Even she never claimed that her father got his money honestly, and she tacitly admitted that he practically stole every cent of it. To show that she was so much better than her folks were, she appointed herself steward and announced that she was going to make amends.

Well, perhaps she was, but five per cent restitution is n't the kind that's billed in the Bible. If the money she had was stolen, and she never said it was n't, it belonged to the people, not to her; and if she were a real Christian, she'd live on five per cent and give

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away ninety-five. But no, she was n't doing anything of that sort. Her badness was different from her father's, that was all. He stole the money because he wanted it, and she kept the money for the same reason; paying out a little now and then as opportunity for notoriety presented itself. Certainly, she was getting her money's worth of notoriety on earth, and the Recording Angel Above was keeping track of that ninety-five per cent, and by and by she'll have to work it out at hard labor in a place where you can't buy prominence for five cents on the dollar.

Was it right for me to allow the *Lamp* to shed subsidized rays, to take pay for saying good things of those who were willing to pay for printed praise? As I saw things then, — or rather, as I did not see things, for my conscience was still in its infancy, — it did seem right, or at least it did not seem wrong, to sell my columns to any respectable buyer of newspaper space, provided I did not outrage decency or the conventions of society. I had space for sale, and Susie Steale wanted it. It was good business to take her money, and business was what I was after in those days.

XXXIII ·

MRS. HUMMING HAMMER was the perpetual president of the Hill-Top Ladies' Club. She was the recognized leader of Chillwell's most exclusive society, of that kind of exclusiveness which objected to associating with any save themselves and to letting the outside know what the inside was doing. Their principal enjoyment consisted in keeping other people away from them. They cared less about what they had than about what they had that others did n't have. Queer, is n't it, that many a fellow in the theatre pit would rather sit in the gallery if the price was higher, and if folks in the pit would envy him in the gallery as the gallery folks envy the occupants of the pit.

I always printed Mrs. Hammer's speeches. It paid to do so.

"Chillwell owes us a debt of gratitude which it can never fully repay!" cried Mrs. Hammer through the columns of the *Lamp*. "Our work has been progressive and uplifting; we have injected into the local veins the nourishment of true beneficence."

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Let me see. Had the Hill-Top Ladies' Club injected or not injected the nourishment of true beneficence? I'm afraid not — not much, by a crowded majority. Here is a month's programme, or rather, bill-of-fare:

First Monday — Chocolate and Mr. Ibsen.

Second Monday — Pink Tea and Handel.

Third Monday — Cake and half a Shakespeare play.

Fourth Monday — Ice cream and Chinese Art.

“The nourishment of true beneficence!” Stuff! Rot! Stuff! Not a word about “That Dangerous Sink Drain,” “My Furnace Gas,” “That Boy of Ours,” “Our Sickly Daughters,” “Our Children and Their Needs,” “God's Sunlight and How to Use It,” “Glorious Out-Doors,” “Ventilation,” “Food and Drink,” “Sleep,” and other things we live in or on.

If the strength of the nation were in the home-clubs of its people, there'd be need of a national gymnasium.

The American home-woman does n't make a speciality of home-making. The average American home should be put to soak; it

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needs more than a feather-duster or a surface scrub.

I had the disguised pleasure of announcing the passing away of the Hill-Top Ladies' Club. But its funeral was a big success. All of the members assembled at the house of Mrs. Wallace Wall, devoted an hour to an exchange of sobs, and then had a jolly time drowning their sorrow in cold tea, hot chocolate, and their accessories.

According to its preamble, the Hill-Top Ladies' Club had a noble mission. According to its practice, the opposite was true. The Hill-Top section was populated by swells, half-swells, and want-to-be-swells, all of the "a-little-better-than-thou" brand. The Knickerbockers and the Pantitaters were at opposite ends of the line, each crowd pulling itself away from the other. Then the Assibelters got hold of the rope, stretched it at the centre and three-ended it, and the Worshippers got hold of the coat-tails, — I beg the ladies' pardon, I mean trains, — and jerked the whole arrangement out of plumb.

The first tea-pouring had been a success, the second a bigger one, and the third had

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put the function into competition. The ladies made it a dress affair, each one pitting her dressmaker against the others' dressmakers. It was a duel of modistes, with as many victories as there were strifes, and the general fight knocked the foundation from under; so that the club died.

I inwardly predicted it. When the thing started, I wanted to say that that kind of fashion was hollow and couldn't help collapsing. I further remarked to myself that when one hundred ladies, each one superior to all the others, get together, discord has its innings. I felt that tea-pouring was hardly strong enough for a sublime object, and that the right kind of female club meeting ought to be something besides a competitive exhibition of modistes' models.

Mrs. Dotty Dougher, the first and only daughter of the late railroad wrecker and all-around gambler, and wife of Dandy Dougher, Chillwell's most noted man-about-town, enjoyed feeding the hungry once a year, which distribution the papers called "magnificent generosity." The local papers, and even the papers miles away from Chill-

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well, fairly boiled over in their unstinted praise of the Dougher's doings.

It had been Mrs. Dougher's custom to give the poor children of Chillwell an entertainment at Christmas time; but one Christmas she and Mr. Dougher were at Monte Carlo, and the entertainment had to be abandoned for a time — the poor had to go hungry to suit her convenience. Mrs. Dougher then advertised the fact that she would gather her little friends about her at Easter. On Easter Saturday, several special street-cars carried two hundred children to Waterman's Hall, where Mrs. and Mr. Dougher waited to receive them. About four o'clock the children were fed, and the *Lamp* reported that "the children enjoyed a most bountiful collation consisting of the delicacies of the season." After asking a blessing, the Reverend Doctor Caterer, of the Church of the Sacred Cash, spoke to the children at some length, and highly eulogized Mrs. and Mr. Dougher for their "magnificent self-sacrificing benevolence.

With the widow's-mite passage pinned on to my editorial wall, let me analyze this

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“magnificent self-sacrificing benevolence.” Mr. and Mrs. Dougher’s “generosity” cost them about five hundred dollars. Together they were worth many millions, which neither of them had earned or in any way contributed towards its accumulation. It was left them by men who would have taken every cent with them if they could have checked it through. The annual income of the pair exceeded two hundred thousand dollars, or a little more than five hundred dollars a day. It appears, then, that that benevolence cost Mr. and Mrs. Dougher less than one day’s income, and gave them something to pleasantly occupy their time. Mrs. Dougher did no actual work, save pour lemonade and look on. The Dougher servants did all the laboring. For five hundred dollars of inherited money, Mrs. Dougher and her matrimonial incumbrance received a blast of advertising, which, at cash rates, would have cost over five thousand dollars.

There was Mercy Meadow, who lived in Chillwell. She was the sick-room angel. She not more than half lived in her leaky little cottage down by the mill-pond. No-

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body ever left her a dollar. Nobody ever gave her a cent. She worked in the mill from early morning till late afternoon; and Sundays, holidays, evenings, and part of her nights she visited sick rooms, soothed the pillow of suffering, gave up her rest, sacrificed society, ate the plainest food, and did good all the time. If a girl was sick at the mill, Mercy tried to do her work for her; if a poor woman's baby was ailing, Mercy rocked the child while its mother slept; she had no time for study, no time for reading, no time for amusement, no time even for church, — for Mercy was doing mercy save when she was earning her frugal fare: and no paper had ever spoken of her, and no clergyman had ever asked a blessing over her food, and no sermon had ever given her mention.

There's going to be a shaking up by and by, and maybe its coming is n't so far off, either. Thinking folks, and folks who want to be fair, will pretty soon begin to scrape the rust off Equality's scales, and to oil the bearings. Then Mercy Meadow on one side of the balance will outweigh all the Doughers, and their hangers-on, and the

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sham philanthropists, and goody-gooders-for-revenue-only.

The *Lamp* was making money. Its subscriptions paid, its advertising paid, and its agricultural-family-tree-growing department was a winner.

But I was getting ready to get out of Chillwell. I had been offered for the *Lamp* about all the money I had put into it, and another offer was expected in the next mail.

I was willing to leave the *Lamp* to other lighters.

XXXIV

MY name was no longer in the Chillwell directory. Again I walked with head erect, with out-curved chest, walked as a man, no longer ashamed of my environment, no longer playing the game of folly to fool the fools.

With my original Chillwell investment in my pocket, and its interest in my head, I bought a ticket from Chillwell, jumped aboard a western-bound train, and pulled down the blind that I might not, as I sped away from her, see her fade and disappear behind the smoke of the struggling engine, hard-puffing to make steam out of the Chillwell atmosphere.

I was going West; West to begin again; West to stay. In the West I would cast my lot, and there, as one among strenuous men, play a fair game of business, to win or to lose.

I was not ticketed to the Far-Away-West, to the isolated place of isolated houses, the too-far-away-from-anywhere to join helping hand to helping hand, or to form a circle of all-around usefulness. I was not bound for

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the woods, nor for the trackless mountains, nor for the sunburnt deserts.

I would enter the New Heart of America. I would permanently lodge myself in the Great Middle West, where the horny hand of agricultural toil grasps the iron fist of labor, and they together co-operate with business, each willing to help the other, each anxious to struggle upwards to the freer air of some equality.

I would locate in a growing city, where well-kept rurality greets comfortable commercialism; together working for the up-building of something like a mutual interest. I would go where man meets man; where man is man; man as he stands on the surface of the Now, not up to his middle in the Has-Been.

As our most strenuous fathers left the tyranny of the fatherland for the opportunities of a newer world, so have the Activity, and the Independence, and the Life, and the Character, of New England breeding and Massachusetts conservatism jumped their lead-weighted cradle, and dropped their bottle of bigotry, to nurse themselves in the

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Western Open, where there was room enough to throw a thought, and catchers who would n't muff it. There live and grow cities and towns founded by the best babies of Eastern conservatism, by the weaned children of its conceit.

The Yeast of the East was rising in the West. Modern enterprise was taking the place of close-shelled frugality, and from the graves of dead dialects was rising the Language of Life.

Mary May did not accompany me. After a protracted series of sensible and sentimental considerations, we decided to postpone our marriage until I had not only located, but had brought my business up to some reasonably permanent plane. But the time of our complete union was then delightfully near. Our "waits" were growing very perceptibly shorter. Our separated oneness was soon to become an all-together. The date of our marriage had been permanently fixed. Mary interposed no "buts" or "ifs." We had given me six months to settle in, and to bring my business into proper shape. We saw our future through the lens of our past.

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I had succeeded in all my undertakings. To better myself I had moved from one place to another. My past experience was my school, and I had been paid, and had not paid, for discipline. Although I was learning more rapidly than I ever had before, I possessed a considerable amount of well-grounded experience, which made my chances of success most probable. In me were three elements of success: a reasonable amount of experience, persistent ambition, and love. Success to me stood for more than it had ever before. It meant both comfort and a home. Experience is one of the great essentials of success, and I had a good supply of it. I was a newly renovated and freshly finished engine. My boiler was filled with the clear and freshly drawn water of experience. My ambition was my fuel, and its supply was unlimited. Love was my engineer, and conditions favored the exercise of her duties. Experience and ambition rightly mixed will move mountains; but add love to the compound, and you may move the world. To a large extent I knew how to succeed, because I had lived among the elements of

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success and had seen them successfully fight the component parts of failure.

It was easier for me to succeed than to fail, and I felt as sure of success as I was of anything within the range of probability. Therefore, Mary and I had every reasonable right to definitely set the day for our union. The great law of probabilities, not the guess-work of desire, allowed the sight of our present to clearly see the facts of our future.

'T WAS midnight when I crossed the Line — the meridian of the timely division 'twixt Eastern settledness and Western willingness. I was too soundly sleeping to hear the click of the central clock saluting America's Middleland with an appreciative jump of an even hour; but my discriminating nerves involuntarily awoke, and in congress assembled passed a vote of gratitude, signed a new lease of opportunity, rescinded the acts of the past and reorganized themselves into a committee of enthusiastic coöperation.

"Fine country, this," said a voice with a reciprocating jingle to it.

'T was the new conductor. The East-grown autocrat of the train of yesterday was not permitted to cross the time-changing line. In the middle of the night there was a swapping of conductors and ideas, and nothing save the car I was on smelt of the unventilated East.

"Sit down," I said, "and if you've the time, let's play a game of conversation."

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"It's your deal," said he. "Massachusetts first."

"What made you think so?" I inquired.

"Don't know how I do it, but I most always hit it right," he replied. "Intuition, I guess."

He was a young fellow, not more than thirty, with a whole-souledness and a heartiness about him that made you know him a year before you had seen him an hour. He was eye-educated, contact-trained. He did n't know much except what he had seen, but he had seen a lot, a big lot. He had been railroading since he was fifteen. He had wheeled over the whole Middle West and had slept in its cities, towns, and villages. He knew its people, because he had handled their freight and their trunks, and had taken their tickets. He had slept in their houses, and boarded at their hotels, had pressed close upon their funeral parties, and had swept up the rice of their weddings. He had seen their travel of comfort and their travel of sorrow.

He knew the Middle West, knew it in general and knew it in detail; and he was

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as familiar with the East as I was, although he had seldom travelled beyond the Line. He could tell the height of Bunker Hill monument and give the names of thirty towns within eye-shot of its pinnacle. He could locate the site of the John Hancock house, and knew something about that historic character. He had tramped the battle-fields of Concord and Lexington, and could find Boston's Old State House without a guide or a guide-book.

He told me things about the East of which I of the East had never heard. 'T was a pity, indeed, that he could not have been book-read as well as world-bred; for had the nature part of him been disciplined, he would have been a man of much more than ordinary mark.

Every other trip through the train he stopped off at my section.

"Think you'll like your new home?" he asked pleasantly, and not in a spirit of prying curiosity.

"Sure I will," I replied.

"Good!" he exclaimed. "Being sure is the thing out here. If you're sure you're

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going to like it, ten to one you will. The other day I met another fellow from your way who was sick of the East and was going to set up his business out here, but he ain't going to make a go of it."

"Why?"

"Because he was sick of himself, and his pluck was down at the heel. Do you know, a fellow who has played himself out ain't fitted to play good ball on the Western diamond."

"You're dead right, my friend; but don't most men who come out here succeed?"

"Most certainly they do," he replied, emphatically. "Nine tenths of 'em make a hit."

"Pardon me," I said, "but you know the Middle West better than any man I have ever seen, and if you've the time I would like to have you tell me why it is that Eastern men of some success so frequently become more successful out here."

He took out his watch. "We don't stop for forty-six minutes," he said. "So here's my idea of it. One reason why the fellow in the East who comes West succeeds is because the

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lame, the halt, and the blind, and the general no-goods stay where they are, whether they are from where you come from or from where I used to live. The dead failure is a loafer, not a mover. He hovers around the place of his bad luck. You can't get him away unless you drag him away. Most of the fellows who come from the East into the West have red blood in them. They are after something, maybe money, maybe fame, but there's something ahead of them, and they're bound to get it, and they were not failures where they were."

"Then you think," I interrupted, "that a failure in the East is likely to be a failure in the West."

"Pretty certain to be," he replied. "I've talked with hundreds of men on their way out here, and the few failures who come out, so far as I have been able to learn, haven't bettered their condition."

"How about the farmers," I asked, "the fellows on the unfertile farms of my State, where you have to coax things to grow, and to pay half as much for your fertilizers as you get for your product?"

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“Of course,” he replied, “there are exceptions, but I generally figure on averages. Safer, don’t you think so?”

I acquiesced.

“Don’t you know,” he continued, “that according to my way of thinking, the fellow who can’t get something out of a rocky farm is n’t likely to get much more out of a fertile clearing. According to what I’ve seen, the Eastern farmer who makes money out West on our vigorous land would have made something even if he had the rockiest and meanest hill farm in New Hampshire.”

“Then it’s the man more than the opportunity.”

“I can’t quite agree with you,” he replied. “I think it’s both, half of each. A good man with half a chance will do something anywhere you put him, and a good-for-nothing won’t do anything if you put him right in the middle of opportunities. You’ve got to have both, — something to get, and a fellow who’s willing to dig for it.”

The sleepers were full of people; even most of the upper berths were leased. The smoking car, travel’s social hall, was always

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filled, and somehow the men got together and swapped experiences and told the same old stories.

I thought I would make a test, so I said, "How many of you live in the East?"

About half put up their hands.

"How many of you Western folks have seen Boston from the dome of the State House?" All but one said "yes."

"Now how many of you Easterners have been inside the State House, have seen the Massachusetts Legislature in session, and have viewed the old flags on exhibition there?" Only one said "aye."

Truly, it seems as though we must go out to the West to know the East, and that our Eastern guide-books would be far more representative of Eastern things and Eastern policies if they were written by non-residents, — by those who, away from the Eastern atmosphere, can more correctly portray Eastern conditions.

The dining-car was under the command of an Ohio man, and he was sympathetically concerned about our digestive comfort. Three times he spoke to me, and he made no

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exception in my case. He treated each and every diner as though the meal-dollar had a value beyond the food's intrinsicity. Even the belted-in Eastern folks aboard forgot to pretend to be reading their reviews, and actually seemed to begin to practise cordiality.

“Actown!” shouted the brakeman.

I had arrived. I was about to be baptized into another environment.

XXXVI

ACTOWN was the commercial centre of a vast agricultural district, the largest town for its size in America. It was a suburbless place of thirty thousand people. Where the town or city left off, the farms began. The streets were broad, and most of them were straight. The town was planned by system, not by guess work or accident. The City Hall was in the centre, where it should be; and symmetrically clustered around it on the right and left were the stores and office buildings.

Half of its people were reorganized and rejuvenated Easterners, voluntary emigrants; folks of too much enterprise and spirit, too much love for freedom, and with too much of a desire to grow where growing is encouraged, to sleep upon the old home mat and live with no to-morrow save it be a part of what is left over of yesterday.

I had purchased the Actown *Morning Herald*. The *Herald* was no better, and perhaps not quite so good, as the *Journal*, the *Globe*, and the *Times*, but it was a paying

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proposition and undoubtedly worth as much as the price I had paid for it. It was well founded, and had never, since its initial years, suffered material loss. It enjoyed the reputation of eminent respectability, well-seasoned with a natural and clean-cut enterprise. Its circulation was nearly twice as large as that of any similar paper in any Eastern town of its size.

I was n't rich, so far as saved-up money goes, or in bank collateral. When I left Chillwell ten thousand dollars accompanied me. The Actown *Herald* was worth twenty-five thousand dollars, and its owners, although they didn't want it, and were anxious to get rid of it, didn't propose to put it on the bargain counter.

I borrowed the additional money, fifteen thousand dollars; and what is better, I got it of the fellow who had foster-fathered the paper at its birth.

Lemuel Linder, my creditor-at-large, was Actown's professional backer. He backed everything, from street railways to newspapers, and from would-be songsters to embryo vaudeville jumpers and twisters.

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He was a climatic mongrel; directly or indirectly he was the product of all American zones. His father was raised among the agricultural rocks of New Hampshire; his mother grew among the cotton fields of South Carolina; his older brother was ranching it on the sunny side of the Rockies; his other brother worked for the Vancouver Government; his married sister kept a Chicago soap-maker out of stockyards society; his bachelor sister taught undenominationalism to the girdle-clothed savages of the Farthest East; in him the North and South had united to spread over the East and West, developing and helping others as they moved onward.

Nature had endowed Lemuel Linder with four Lemuel Linders; four separate yet harmonious personalities:

There was Lemuel Linder, the trader, one of the best that ever caught a bargain. He was a genuine tradesman, with every nerve and instinct timed to move and strike at the call of profit. He was n't a storekeeper; he had never leaned over from the selling side of the counter. He knew little about

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specific values or qualities; he could n't tell a Brussels from a Wilton; he could n't see the intrinsic difference between pine and spruce; he could n't figure costs with any degree of technical accuracy. But he knew how to find out how to learn what he wanted to know; and more, he knew where to place his finger upon the right man, at the right time, for the right place.

Lemuel Linder owed his business success to his ability to buy anything that he could get for a price less than he could sell it for. He was n't a hard man; rather, he was generous and kindly, with a willingness, even in business, to recognize the other fellow in the trade, but always provided he was n't a loser. He was president of the Actown Street Railway, president of the largest bank, director of two insurance companies, vice-president of the Board of Trade, and he held a dozen other profitable and honorable business positions. He owned a half interest in the Cosmopolitan Clothing Company, and let his partners do the work. He was proprietor of the ice houses, but he did n't cut any ice; his men did it for him. He con-

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trolled the electric lighting plant, and sold electricity at a rate which encouraged its consumption.

Was he honest in business? Yes, for he has never been in jail, and neither he nor any of his enterprises were ever before the Grand Jury. Of course, he drove a sharp bargain, and the man against him usually did as he told him to do; but there was, in his trading, little of that conscienceless brutality that marks the doings of our business giants who would kill to win.

Lemuel Linder, in his business, dishonest as he was at times, was far more honest, far more liberal, far more decent than are half of our wealthy men, who have no other God before the "Me!"

Next, there was Lemuel Linder the citizen. He loved Actown; he had adopted it, and it had adopted him. He was at the front of all public-spirited events. He never made a speech, because he could n't, and he knew that he could n't. But he was always on the platform, a public-seen supporter of every movement calculated to be of benefit to him and others.

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Then there was Lemuel Linder the philanthropist. He loved those who loved him; he loved them with the same measure of love that was meted out to him. He would far rather do good than not, and always did, unless there was nothing in it for him. His philanthropy positively refused to invest in anything which did n't put him on its board of management. He would share, but he would not give without sharing.

And there was Lemuel Linder in himself, in his conceited self. Much as he loved his fellow-man, much as he loved his town, much as he loved to help others, he loved himself with a deep-sunken, riveted-in affection, that was a living, indestructible part of every part of himself. He would push nothing that did n't help to push him. But there was no deceit in his conceit. With all his self-love, his irresistible desire to lift himself, there was a rough, crude, hearty, blunt honesty about him, which penetrated more deeply than could a mere whitewash for his sins, and placed him upon a plane far and away above that occupied by ninety-nine one-hundredths of the rank and file of business promoters.

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Lemuel Linder looked out for himself, but after he had cleared himself he had time to help his fellows. No struggling widow or parentless child cried for the bread Lemuel Linder had taken from them. When he stole, he stole from other financial thieves, from folks who deserve to lose.

Lemuel Linder liked me; that was n't enough to make him back the *Herald*, but it was sufficient when, with liking me, he expected to receive eight per cent on his investment. He was my friend. While his money owned fifteen twenty-fifths of the *Herald*, he never dictated its policy; never interfered. He was one of those few men of success who know enough to keep their hands off of what others do better for them than they could do for themselves.

Lemuel Linder was fifty per cent pure man.

XXXVII

I WENT to Actown's best hotel when I first arrived. There I proposed to make my home until Mary came.

The checkered-vested clerk could read writing upside down, and instantly he spelled out my name, reached his hand across the counter, grasped mine, and exclaimed,

"Glad, very glad to see you, Mr. New."

I felt at home. There's nothing in all the world that will drive lonesomeness out of your heart so quickly as to hear your own name spoken with the heartiness of a ringing good-cheer.

The clerk repeated mine several times; interwove it into every sentence. Perhaps this was part of his business, but if it was, so much the better for the policy of his business.

Born as I was, bred as I was, reared as I had been, filled with the unsatisfying stuffing of conservative indigestibles, it seemed, at first, as though the whole town was a great big vaudeville stage, and that all its people were specialty actors, with an often descending curtain, that it might rise upon a

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series of delightful surprises. It did n't cost the clerk anything, nor the hotel either, to refuse to let me have a room until I had inspected a dozen. The bell-boy had something to say, and what he said was n't intrusive. I felt at home, because I was made to feel at home; and yet no one did anything for me, from the waitress in the dining-room to the proprietor in his private office, which cost one single cent or one single atom of wearisome exertion.

I wanted to be there, they wanted to have me there, and we swapped costless yet priceless courtesy.

Cordiality is the least expensive and farthest going of all commodities, and its practitioners represent our best successes. It is the key which unlocks the social and business doors, bringing men closer together, helping them to better work together, lightening their burdens, and changing the twilight of trouble into the sunlight of happiness.

The Actown papers were uncracked mirrors of Actown, and Actown was not ashamed to daily see itself in its four typographical looking-glasses. Almost every one



Is n't this Mr. New, the new editor of the Herald?

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in Actown who could afford it was a regular subscriber to each of her newspapers, and one paper was read almost as generally as was another.

My managing editor became my introducer. With him I walked and drove about the town, and visited the stores and city departments, the schools, and other places, that I might as soon as possible become familiar with conditions and people, to be the better able to meet them. He, like me, was a "reformed" Easterner. He began in Portland, that "Little Bosting" down in Maine. He was a well kneaded mixture of Eastern caution with Western "pushability."

"Wallace," I said one day, "what is there about Actown that is so different from our Eastern towns? Here I feed upon the same meat that I ate in the East — the Western beef of the West, instead of the Western beef of the East; I drink the same kind of coffee, made in the same kind of a coffee-pot; I sleep upon the same kind of a mattress, with the same kind of paper on the walls; the elevator, which carries me up and which brings me down, is made of the same kind of iron,

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and is driven by the same kind of a motor; but I seem to be a different sort of a man — more of a man. My associates, my neighbors, my workmen, dress the same and look the same as do the folks of the East; but there is something about them, or rather something surrounding them, which makes them appear to be different, which makes them act in a different way, which makes them more human, or, perhaps, assists them in utilizing their humanity to an extent beyond the movement of Eastern humanity. What is it?"

"I felt the same thing," he replied, "when I arrived at Actown, and it took me a considerable time to locate the microbe which is responsible for the difference, for there is a difference, a big difference."

"Then you felt it, did you?" I exclaimed. "Tell me, what is it?"

"Let me ask you first," he said, "if you don't feel your individuality as you never did before? To yourself, don't you seem to have changed?"

"Yes."

"Don't you seem to be in better control of yourself?"

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“Decidedly. I feel as though I was commander of myself, and in charge of a stronger and better equipped army of myself.”

“And you can’t explain it on the ground that you are older and have gained more experience?”

“Not altogether.”

“I think I can feel the reason better than I can talk it,” he said, “but I’ll try and put it into words. Human nature is human nature, the same as flesh is flesh. There does n’t appear to be much substantial difference between the human material, whether it be of the East, of the Middle West, of the West, of the Far West, of the North, or of the South. The stock appears to be about the same. This being the case, then, the only explanation possible is that of environment. I’m not referring to climatic conditions, although they sometimes count. For instance, the inhabitant of a cold region is naturally more active, both physically and mentally, than is the resident of the equator; but this cannot apply to the Middle West as compared with the East, because there are not sufficient heat differences. Therefore,

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geographical conditions have little or nothing to do with it."

"A moment, please," I interrupted. "I understand that it is true that a proportion, and perhaps a large proportion, of the inhabitants of Actown were Eastern born and bred, and yet when they arrive here they seem to change. Do they pass through a filter, and if so, where is the filter located? Here are the same people, and yet they are a different people."

"The only filter I can think of," he replied, laughingly, "is the Buffalo depot, and I don't think that changed anything."

"But to continue, let me go back to first principles; or rather, to the emigration of the East to the West. Substantially all of our early settlers were men of grit, motor men, who dared to do something. If these men had been in the majority in the East, many of them would n't have come West; but because they were in the great minority, they did n't have the encouragement to act naturally. They were strong men, and this class of men constitutes substantially all of the Easterners who are now Western-

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ers. You know how much you and I were impressed as we looked at the great circus crowd, the other day, from the vantage point of the press stand?"

"Any large gathering of people impresses me, and especially a crowd like a circus crowd, which takes in everybody," I replied.

"In that audience of ten thousand," said he, "we will assume that there were one hundred highly educated men, who enjoy our best literature."

"Easily granted."

"Now these one hundred educated men, although filled with education, did n't think of literature, or did n't shed literature, while the band played and the gymnasts jumped."

"Again granted."

"They were not in a literary atmosphere, but in a circus atmosphere, therefore they temporarily changed from educated men into circus-audience men."

"Go on," I said; "I begin to see the end of the argument and to appreciate the truth of it."

"Our Eastern men of enterprise did n't beg, borrow, or steal their enterprise when

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they came to Actown. They brought it with them. They did n't get together in the East, and therefore their spirit of enterprise remained more or less dormant. Their real selves, by custom remained within themselves. Out here they meet men of their kind, and they become enterprising, and broad, and active, simply because they give of themselves to others and receive a return from those they give to. In other words, out here men become a part of a great human exchange, a mutual exchange."

"True, absolutely true," I said. "You have explained the enterprising part of it, but what about the hospitality?"

"Oh, that's easy," he replied quickly. "Where there is an exchange of enterprise, there is a diffusion of hospitality. One without the other cannot live."

"Then it's simply a question of good in storage or good in circulation."

"Exactly."

Thus, in Actown, a commodious centre of the Great Middle West, among men, many born as I was born, who had lived as I had lived, and who had the strength and character

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to lift themselves from out the Pit of the Past into the Responsibilities of the Present, I had located myself, and had begun to forget what I was, that I might the better know of what I am and may be, that I might do my best where one's best was a commodity.

I did n't find perfection there; there's no perfection anywhere, as yet; but about me was the rendezvous of the strongest men, men fit to be fathers; the healthiest women, women built to be mothers; the freshest thought, free thought; the quickest action, action that counts; — all unanchored to the Past.

There, what Is was doing its best.

There, to-day was not a part, but a continuance, of yesterday and a forerunner of to-morrow.

XXXVIII

THERE was competition in Actown. Every storekeeper, every barber, and every lawyer, tried to get all the business he could, and to take it away from his neighbor; but this competition was open, and there was a frankness about it, a heartiness about it, and a sort of coöperation about it, which made each man work harder and accomplish more than is possible under the secret, under-running competition of the East.

In Actown, the banker who wanted your deposit did n't talk so much against his rival as he did about the advantages of his own bank. Men fought each other in business and fraternized with each other at home. There, the owner of the North Department Store nominated as president of the Board of Trade the owner of the South Department Store, his bitterest rival. There, two auctioneers would auction against each other, meet in a lunch-room, and there enjoy a friendly fight as to who should pay the checks.

There was no prevailing extravagance.

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People were frugal, cautious, and economical; but the economic policy was not so much in how much was saved as in how one could best use what he had. There was a tendency to deposit a percentage of this world's goods where it would draw living interest.

There was society, and society of all kinds, from the painted caste of the colored barber to the cracked caste of the faded Blue-Blood. But these lines were not so sharply drawn, and there was little more than a turnstile gate between the grades. There were few of any class who materially objected to an increase in membership. Every one of every class of society worthy of being propagated, was more anxious for growth than for exclusiveness. No club had a waiting-list for the sake of having one. If there was a waiting-list, it was because there were not accommodations for an increased membership.

In the whole of Actown there were only three private carriages with a crest, and all the crests were genuine.

The literary side of Actown lived on the same streets as were occupied by the business part of Actown. There was no society exclu-

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sively confined to any fad, policy, or thing. There was intentional mixture. The literary brain cohabited with the brain of business, each proud of itself and proud of its opposite. Intellectuality appreciated materiality and asked materiality's assistance, and materiality was happy when associating with intellectuality.

The educational side of Actown had made rapid strides, and Actown's motherhood grade was a lofty mountain in comparison with that of the maternal foot-hills of the East.

Actown was not a prohibition city. There were altogether too many dram shops, and each one did a flourishing business; but the tendency was against drunkenness, and each year recorded a lesser number of intoxications. There was a feeling, in which even the church people joined, more in favor of substitution than of prohibition—a feeling which spent some of its endeavors in an attempt to create something better than a saloon, rather than to ask the drinker to leave the saloon and find his social life nowhere.

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Although there were not so many churches in Actown as there are in every New England town of its size, there were more denominations and more church buildings than the demand required. But denominationalism did n't appear to be an essential part of religion, as it is in the East, nor did the church of Actown so prominently claim to be exclusive authority and the only authorized representative of the Hereafter. I found this material difference between the denominational thought of Actown and the denominational conceit of the East. In my old home, not one per cent of the few church people who were liberal enough and Christian enough to admit the non-essentiality of denomination believed that Christianity could succeed as a union; while in Actown there were few denominationalists who did not look forward to the time when sectarianism would not be considered other than the policy of an ignorant expediency.

Most of the Actown pastors were men, manly men, men not under the yoke of theology. Comparatively few of them were entirely ignorant of the world; and, there-

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fore, most of them were able to assist the world. A Methodist and a Presbyterian church actually consolidated, the two pastors remaining as associates, and this was done for the Glory of God and the Brotherhood of Man. The success of this church surpassed all expectation. Here the Bread and Water of Life were carried as regular stock, and all the distributors of them did not wear Prince Albert coats nor live in bay-windowed houses.

Because there were few millionaires in Actown, the church was supported by common money and was not in the employ of an alleged repentant master of finance who thought it was shrewd figuring to attempt to purchase salvation at five cents on the dollar. Actown in the church and out of it was made up of average people, and the grade of its people was higher than I have ever seen throughout the length and breadth of New England.

There was an averageness about the commercial side as well as about the intellectual side. I have never seen so many people in business for themselves as I saw in Actown,

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and therefore I have never seen so much effective individuality and happy personality.

They tell a good story about a fellow who came to Actown five years before I did, looking for a job. Although he didn't wear a plug hat, a high collar, and linked cuffs, more than half the people he met were glad to see him.

The first night, he took a hotel proprietor into his confidence, told him who he was and what he wanted to do.

"Any openings here?" he inquired.

"Plenty of 'em," replied the hotel man.

"To whom would you advise me to apply first?"

"I wouldn't advise you to apply at all."

"What!"

"Say," said the hotel man, pointedly, "have you got any money?"

"Well, I guess I could raise a thousand or two."

"Do you know any big folks East, who would vouch for you here?"

"Plenty of them."

"I'll tell you what I'd do," said the hotel man. "Get your money together, get your

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letters of introduction, board with us for a month or two, so as to get climatized, — and say, I won't charge you more than boarding-house rates, — and go into business for yourself. We ain't over-crowded in your line."

"But I'm a stranger here," replied the new-comer. "Do you mean to say that I can get acquainted in a couple of months?"

"Sure. Get the letters of introduction, present them, and the folks you're introduced to will introduce you to the rest."

The Eastern man did as he was told. He is now running one of the most profitable retail stores, and is an Actown fixture.

XXXIX

ACTOWN was proud of her Actown-made university. It was n't a very large one, and it had n't been established very long, but it was the biggest institution of learning for its age in the whole wide world. Its growth, though rapid, was healthy. It was established because it was needed; and because it was needed, it was at once filled with pupils who wanted education and who were willing to work for it.

President Wright had collected his education in the East, in the West, and in foreign universities. He was mentally broad and intensely practical. He lived in the world, and learned from the world, before he attempted to teach others to enter the world. He did n't deserve the entire credit for the raising of the money to establish his university, or for the money which kept it alive. A part of this credit was due to those who contributed the money.

At one time he wanted fifty thousand dollars. He obtained permission to speak at the Fourth of July celebration.

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"My friends," he said, and when he called them friends he told the truth, because they were his friends, "your college wants fifty thousand dollars."

Then he told them why.

"We have no chairs for sale," he continued, "and no room for memorial windows, nor have we any marble slabs to let. I'm not going to beg. I'm simply going to tell you that this special work cannot begin unless we have this money. I don't want pocket-book money. Each dollar must be accompanied with a heart throb of good-will."

He got the money, every cent of it, within a week, and every one of the contributors sent himself with the money, and not one of them asked or expected anything more than the hand-shake of acceptance.

There were college-bred men and women in circulation in Actown, as many per capita as could be found in any New England home-town, save the few which are but bedrooms for their universities, where education-making is the only industry.

But somehow the college-bred men and women of Actown didn't seem to be, and

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didn't seem to act, as did their learned counterparts of the East. I had dined three weeks consecutively at the best-furnished club before an *alma mater* was served between the courses. I knew four college-trained women who could drink two cups of tea without a mention of "my college."

Think of it, comprehend it, if you can! College women, some pretty, some otherwise — graduates too — degreeists, and some of them with their names in the magazines, meeting each other without an eternal mention of campus days.

It never occurred in the East, that imitation of the Athenian land, where classical men are alleged to be as numerous as the blades of grass, and where college-loaded women, in glasses and black shirt-waists, chew home-made gum behind the polka-dot necktie counters and fill out the sales-slips with Roman numerals.

One of the most amusing incidents I ever witnessed occurred at a reception. Among those present was an Easterner, just off the campus, — a college chicken but two weeks hatched. On a pony he had ridden through

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a fashionable Eastern university. Pinned to his coat flaps, and hanging to his chain, were the emblems of regular and irregular societies. He was covered with college paint. His conversation ran something as follows:

“Delighted to see you. Ah, your face is familiar; didn’t I meet you at Learned?” or else, “I see you’re a Knowit man, ’84? I’m Learned, ’85.”

During the evening he was introduced to one of our recent graduates, a bright young woman, and assistant-elect at the Actown High School. At a glance she weighed him. They were soon surrounded by several of Actown’s young men and women. The “Moon of the East” began to reflect some of the light which didn’t belong to “it.” He started in to impress the company. He misquoted from the classics and unloaded a volatile vocabulary of vociferous verbosity. The young woman took her turn. Quietly, yet pointedly, she opened a gattling fire of questions, — of practical questions, each requiring a substantial answer, and she shrewdly avoided book and memory subjects which the lesson-crammed fool can usually successfully

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meet. She addressed each question to him personally. He stumbled over those which did n't completely throw him down. As fast as his answer failed to arrive, she shot the question at another of her party. Quick as a flash came the correct reply. But she did n't squelch him, although she furnished splendid amusement for those about her. When a man knows a little, the chances are that he will not know enough to know how little he does know.

It was a pretty battle, yet there was a shade of sadness to it. The "books" of the East were no match for the "sense" of the West. Actown men and women of "higher education" kept their ammunition on the firing line.

XL

LAWYER BARR, a man of about my age, called on me — heartily introduced himself. He was one of those fellows whom you could hang a hat on, and not worry about it in a wind storm. To be with him made me feel glad that he lived, and glad that I was living, too.

He was a college graduate, and had been further educated abroad, and had travelled over the biggest part of the world. He knew the men and things of here and elsewhere. He went around with a favor in both hands, and thanked you to take them away from him. He carried himself on his face, that all might read him as he was. The good in him was n't an antagonistical shoulder-chip. He fairly radiated good-will and public spirit. In less than a month we were partners in friendship, and it seemed as though I had been introduced to him when I first met myself. I used his willingly contributed friendship as a *Herald* asset.

About town, folks did n't say, "Who *was* he?" but, "Who *is* he?" There's a great big

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difference here, a difference as broad as the great ocean of thought.

Actown was to me like an oasis in my great social desert, where the parched throat of conservative dryness may drink freely from the springs of humanity-filtered water; not water so sparkling, or so clear, or so thirst-quenching as it will be when values are valued at their value, and when things as they are play the leading rôles on the great stage of life, with the has-beens and what-wases reduced to the chorus.

The Honorable Samuel Stock of Actown was n't a chronic office-holder. He made a success of himself before he allowed himself to tell his State how to succeed. He was one of the few members of the Legislature who believed that no man should serve his country who could n't profitably serve himself. He claimed that the one great qualification of a statesman was success in his calling before he attempted to make laws for others. He was n't an eloquent speaker, and he never made a long speech, but every word he said weighed a ton, and fell with crushing effect upon those opposed to what he was advocat-

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ing. As a successful business man, he knew business, and when he talked business, there was business back of his words. In a ten-minute speech before the Senate, he is reported to have said, "Business, as it is conducted, is largely responsible for the corrupt state of governmental affairs. The government should be the body that cleans up the odious matter, instead of supplying it or aiding in distributing it."

The Honorable Samuel Stock had presented mighty good proof that he was n't in the employ of some corrupt corporation or commercial combination for the suppression of individualism.

We hear a lot about Legislative corruption. What 's the cause of it? Are our officials dishonest? Most of them may be. Part of them surely are. Why are they dishonest? Partly because they get the chance. If they did n't get the chance to profit by dishonesty, most of them might be fairly respectable. The rank and file of legislators are n't gunning for steals. They would rather be honest. If money is shoved into their palms, it sticks there. If bribers were

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not so numerous, there wouldn't be so many bribe-takers. If temptation weren't always on dress parade, there wouldn't be so many looking at it. The fellow most to blame is n't the legislator who falls, but the one who fell deeper to make him fall. The bribe-giver is twice as bad as the bribe-taker. The bribe-taker has the excuse of temptation — perhaps of need. The bribe-giver is a plain, deliberate, premeditated scoundrel. The shyster lawyer-agent of bribers, with his soul steeping in sin and his hands calloused with dirty money, is bad enough, but he is n't a hypocrite, and he is n't half as rotten as the kid-gloved, white-neck-tied, diamond-studded merchant, seated in his leather-furnished office, high up in business prominence and social standing, who makes his extra money by bribing the fellow who is poor enough to sell his vote for the bread of comfort.

Business is the breeding bed of legislative corruption. Business at heart respects no law. Business with business is first, last, and all the time. For business' sake consciences are cauterized, souls sold, integrity driven

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through the cash-paved streets of bribery, that it may worship business's only god — money.

For Business, Progress is made to wait. To Business, Education is chained. Before Business the Church is prostrated.

The Christian reformer need n't go to Africa, or to Asia, or to the North End, or to the South End. Let him camp on Market Street, or on Stock Square, or on Merchants' Row, and, armed with the Light of Heaven and the Drums of Hell, wage war on business.

The kneeling churchman may be a scoundrel, the good father and affectionate husband may be a home-sugared villain. By their church life, and by their home life, we may not know men. But the honest business man is the champion Christian. The fellow who successfully fights pocket-book interests is sin's greatest enemy. On him rests the hope of civilization. The only unprejudiced scale is the scale of business. By it men are accurately weighed. Tell me how a man does business, and I will tell you what he is. By no other measure can we measure him with any degree of accuracy.

XLI

ACTOWN'S schools occupied larger buildings, and better ones, than I had seen in many Eastern towns. There was not an antiquated school-house in Actown, nor one of questionable healthfulness. Many of the teachers were Eastern born, Eastern bred, and Eastern educated; the picked quality of the East, who, grown from conservatism, had developed into progressiveness. The methods of teaching and the educational curriculums were not entirely founded upon the dry dust of prehistoric, historic, or faddish policies.

The *Herald* gave much attention and space to educational matters, and, being the city's official organ, printed close-to-verbatim reports of the school committee's meetings.

Nearly all the members of Actown's school committee were progressive and successful business or professional men; but even our best men sometimes imbibe too much of the spirit of economy, and while under its depressing influence, do things which they would have been ashamed to have dreamed of upon

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the night before or upon the night following action.

Mr. Timothy Truth was chairman of the school committee, and one of my best friends. He drew me to him when first we met, and I was glad to get close to his personality. He was recognized as Actown's brightest citizen, ablest speaker, and most profitable compounder of sense, logic, and business. He manufactured agricultural implements. His factory was a genuine daylight working home for his men. Mr. Timothy Truth's ideas of philanthropy began on his premises. He did n't adapt his philanthropy to his business, but he brought his business under his philanthropy. Expediency was not his first consideration. As soon as his business was on its feet, he went into executive session with himself and conscientiously and persistently thought out a business-doing plan, which ran as close as possibility would allow to the active principles of the Golden Rule.

His ambition was to serve God while serving man. He reasoned that man needed man's help more than God needed it, and that by glorifying man, God was glorified. He

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had far from conventional ideas about the church and worship. He felt that it was man's duty to do his earthly duty rather than to make his earthly duty subordinate to what the church called the worship of God. He felt that the worship of God was more in serving man than in wordy worship of the Most High. He believed that life should be one long service to God and man, not a series of periodical and selected invocations. He felt that it was more important to learn how to live than it was to discover how to die. His innermost soul told him that living was his business and that dying was God's business. He did n't expect God to do his business, nor did he consider it his business to do God's business. Because he loved man with his whole heart and soul, he loved God, for no man can love man who does n't love God who made man. He felt that God was aiding him, because he was devoting himself to God's people, instead of tiring God with the wordy worship of laziness.

While he ran his business upon business principles, and while he maintained discipline, every man in his shop was his friend and co-

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worker. Every workman had an interest in the business, and every year the profits were divided according to the decision of a board of control, of which he was chairman, one half of the members being elected from among his employees.

Mr. Timothy Truth was interested in every movement for the betterment of humankind. He had no sympathy for one-eyed reform, with its cross-eyed field of vision. He was opposed to those reformers who would Christianize the world by any one form of prohibition or by a selected form of reform. He believed in the up-building of the whole man, not in the attempt to force any special part of man upward. He would lift man from his boots up. He would strengthen the entire frame, mental and physical, and not abnormally develop a muscle or an idea. He believed that civilization would rapidly grow only when the good things were working harmoniously together and pitting themselves *en masse* against the bad things. He had no use for the salve which apparently removed the pimple. He would get rid of it by cleansing the entire

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system. He would not sponge the spot out of the cloth. He would wash the entire fabric. He looked upon the school as the greatest civilizing force, not altogether because of the studies it taught, but because it first introduced the coming man to the world he was to live in. The school to him was a great fundamental principle. It did not represent one idea. It represented all ideas.

Mr. Al Atomet was also a member of the school committee. He was the chronic Ac-town economist and head-champion mean-man and progress-brake, one of those fellows who did n't smile indoors for fear of fading the carpet. He was anti-wise and pro-foolish. He worshipped Nothing and lived on his god. He was perpetually against spending money, no matter what it was spent for. To him the use of money, save the getting of it, was a crime. He never read the *Herald* or any other paper, because he could n't do it without paying something, unless he went to the library, and he could n't do that, because he had the distinction of being the only man in town opposed to its maintenance. An epi-

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demic of spasms of economy was prevalent at the time of the last election, and the economic wing of the party nominated and elected Al Atomet a member of the school committee. At the annual meeting, the question of expenses for the ensuing year was under discussion. Mr. Atomet, as usual, harangued against the cost of everything. His words had some weight, because he was successful in business, and because some of the members occasionally washed down their suppers with generous glasses of fluid economy. At one time it looked as though Mr. Atomet would succeed in seriously handicapping the work of the schools, by defeating many of the proposed expenditures.

Mr. Timothy Truth waited until the economical wave had passed its height. Then he stood up, and in less than twenty minutes there was n't enough left of Mr. Al Atomet and his crowd to make coffee settlings. Mr. Timothy Truth was n't alone on the side of sense in economy. He handled the colleagues with masterly skill, and he led the Board back to a realization of true economy, the kind that would rather stake a necessary dollar and

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win two, not the kind that would only risk a cent to get back a cent.

Queer, is n't it, how decent folks will sit in the corners and sulk, waiting for somebody with fire inside to flame up. Well, Mr. Timothy Truth was a-blaze, and he did n't want for fuel after he lighted up. Cheers greeted his first point; then the real men stood up, and Al Atomet and his unburied dead were tumbled into the hole they had dug for themselves.

Actown was one of the best towns on earth, no matter if some of its enterprise occasionally kept itself in cold-storage, to run out only when there was a fire.

Some of the mothers of Actown unsexed themselves sufficiently to take a living interest in the Actown schools; and probably as many as fifteen per cent had visited a school-room and had courageously offered to be a party to coöperation, a sort of assistant teacher and accessory scholar. This policy was encouraged; the atmosphere was actually tainted with it.

Think of it, Eastern parents, mothers with pedigrees, your Actown sisters — no, your

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Actown cousins, because they are too far removed from you to be of nearer relationship — actively engaged in a grade of motherhood beyond the feeding and clothing of their youngsters. Realize it, if you can, you contented conservatives. Fifteen per cent — fifteen per cent net — of Actown's mothers with an interest strong enough and active enough to walk outside the home-yards and to premeditatedly, willingly, and enthusiastically present themselves on the great educational altar for the benefit of the rising generation of humanity.

True, eighty-five per cent of the Actown mothers got up, combed their hair, bathed from their foreheads to their necks, and from their finger-tips to their wrists, each and every morning; dressed their children, fed them on the same kind of grease, and on the same kind of other stuff that Eastern children struggle to digest; and sent them to school, and fed them again when they came back; and put them to bed again, and woke them up in the morning, just as Eastern mothers do, and just as their mothers' mothers used to do.

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The centre of civilized motherhood, even in Actown, remained in the barnyard, where the baby calves and the baby pigs were hygienically raised, because the better the stock, the more money there is in it.

The pig's breakfast is seldom late. His food is selected and it is carefully measured. Sometimes the children eat on time, and sometimes they eat food adapted to their condition, but quite often the breakfast is late, the other meals are irregular, and it is mighty seldom that one finds the same care in human food selection and preparation that one almost always sees in the mixing trough at the barn. Pigs are property, and therefore they must be taken care of. The care of the pig is recognized as a necessity to business economy. No matter if the child of to-day is to be the man of to-morrow, no matter if his body is the temple of his eternal soul, no matter if one child is more precious than a million pigs, he is n't considered a business asset and is n't raised for the market. But somehow I cannot help feeling that from every point of view, including the business viewpoint, it would pay to raise children for the market

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of civilization, and that if they were properly raised, they would earn the highest dividends.

As I studied my neighbors, and as I came in closer contact with Actown's life, I more and more felt, as the days passed, that right here, right in the centre of this Middle West, was to be successfully fought the great Battle of Brains against Prejudice, and that I was living not far from that earthly spot which generations to come will honor with the name of our Second Holy Land.

XLII

EVERY Actown merchant and store-keeper, from the proprietor of the biggest department store to the man who ran a laundry, belonged to the Actown Board of Trade; and what is more, took an active interest in it. The average attendance at its meetings was said to exceed seventy-five per cent of the entire membership. There were other clubs and associations, and every one of them was doing something, not spasmodically, but regularly and persistently.

The One-Of-A-Kind-Club was a unique affair. Its membership was limited to a representative of every local calling. The constitution and by-laws were written by an original diplomat. There was no membership committee, nor could any one be elected by the members into membership. Any specific class of business, with a local representation of three or more, was permitted to send a delegate member; for instance, the Actown bar, at one of its meetings, chose a certain lawyer, and he became a member of the club for life or during good behavior. Its

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meetings consisted of a monthly banquet at the Actown Hotel, at which addresses were made by some of the members, the bulk of the speakers, however, being out-of-towners with national reputations. While only a selected few could enjoy membership in the club, the number of invited guests was limited only by the capacity of the dining-room.

The former proprietor of the *Herald* was the journalistic member. At a meeting of the Actown newspaper men, I was unanimously chosen as his successor, a compliment which would have been absolutely impossible of occurrence in the East. When a committee informed me of my election, I felt as much like a baby as I did when, not my brother, but another fellow's brother, years and years ago, divided the only apple the two of us had and gave me the bigger half.

At the end of my first month, I knew more Actowners, and knew them better than I knew Muchtowners and Chillwellers after I had been a year with them. The better part of Actowners were members of a bureau of friends at large. Actown carried a complete assortment of associates and friends.

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Men actually stopped me in the street, men I had never seen before, and put out their hands and said,

“Is n’t this Mr. New, the new editor of the *Herald*? ”

Brought up as I had been, experienced as I was, it took me several days to get used to it, and to return the regulation grip with unsurprised cordiality. At first I felt as though I were being held up, and that these drops of human kindness were intended to soak their way into my pocket-book.

When the Baptist minister met me, he was genuinely glad to see me, and he did n’t ask me if I was a Baptist, either. When I met the Congregational minister, he took pains to tell me that the Baptist minister had the biggest soul for the size of his body of any man in town.

When I went to church, the hand-shaking was not confined to the going in, and the welcome was not all on the mat at the door. True, every one of the churches wanted me, and they were not sufficiently unbusinesslike not to think of pew-rent, but they intended to give some return, and most of them did.

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I confidently believe that more than twenty per cent of Actown's church members were Christians, or tried to be; and that is a big proportion if the census-taker knocks at the back door of meeting-house piety.

I attended church sociables — yes, church sociables, mark you, where the glorifying of God was not confined to the dishing of ice-cream or to the cutting of chocolate cake; but where good-will was served with scalloped oysters without extra charge; and where the milk of human kindness was stirred into the coffee.

Generally the pastor took me in hand, and made me feel as though I was an honored guest. Hardly had I had time to swallow his dose of hospitality, which was not the sugar-coated or policy-covered imitation, when he passed me along to the next, — one of his officers, — and from him I was handed to another, and so on, until I felt as though I belonged there.

Turning to one of my introducers, I remarked, and I think my voice trembled,

“My friend, this is so strange to me. Why, do you know, I feel more at home here —

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and I have n't been here an hour — than I ever felt at my own church gatherings."

My conductor smiled.

"Mr. New," he said, "if I had n't been Eastern born and Eastern raised, I should n't be able to understand just what you mean; but as I came from the East, I can readily understand your feelings. You have to pass through two changes before you are acclimated; first, you must get used to the climate; and next, you must get used to the people."

Gently pushing him into a corner, I said,

"Mr. Mann, as you are an Easterner, may I not talk with you in a fraternal way?"

"Certainly," he replied heartily.

"Is this hospitality which I am receiving, and which I understand every other decent fellow receives, the genuine thing or is there something back of it? I know there is such a thing as all-wool hospitality, but if this sort of thing had hit me in the East, I should think they were after something, or, to speak plainly, that I was in the middle of a leg-pulling bee."

"Mr. New," he answered, in all seriousness.

"I've lived here ten years. I came here as

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you came; and while there is hypocrisy here, and while folks are looking out for themselves, I think that Actown hospitality is as much as eighty per cent pure.

“ But if one desires to have his leg pulled,” he continued, “ I think there are those who will accommodate him; but leg-pulling out here is different from what it is in the East.”

I found that difference everywhere. Blessed “ difference.”

XLIII

HOSPITALITY was in the air. Ac-towners inhaled it and exhaled it. Cordiality was epidemic, and good-fellowship crossed the tape with good-will abreast.

Business was attended to, and there was much business hustle, seemingly an everlasting business bustle, and an expenditure of much business muscle; and yet there was time for the exercise of the niceties of life — those costless little things which are worth so much in every market everywhere.

Because I was a new-comer, because I began to improve the *Herald*, because I was well recommended, but above all, because I was a man, or was reckoned as a man, the hand of good-fellowship reached out to me from every quarter of the town. There was a continuous string of callers at my editorial rooms.

Some came from curiosity, that they might view me, and talk to, and be talked at by, the new editor, who had come out of the learned East; some came for favors; but

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most of them to swap good-will. Even Actown's leg-pullers were merciful; they didn't confine their strenuous labors to the lengthening of the right leg or of the left leg, at the sacrifice of the other leg. When they pulled, they pulled with charitable evenness, that the victim might not heel either way when he walked.

Among my regular and every-other-day callers was General Pouff. He dropped in at eleven and left at eleven-thirty. There was a consistent promptness about the fellow that kept him from being a nuisance.

He was Actown's professional and continuous politician. He had studied law, but was never admitted to the Bar. He had been to a medical school, but had neither killed nor cured. He had shouldered a gun, but had never pulled a trigger. He had carried a sword, and was still carrying it, but he never did anything with it save to return a salute. His military title was a slice off the Governor's staff, loaned him because he was popular and because he looked well in uniform.

General Pouff had held every desirable city office save that of the mayoralty. He

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was n't a political pauper, because he had money, money earned amid the rocks and treeless stumps of Maine, money which came to him by mail at the decease of an Eastern ancestor.

The General was conceited; yes, so much conceited that he never was lonesome so long as he and himself were together. He believed in himself, and yet this self-adoration was as honest, and as deep-set, and as conscientious as were the convictions of the Mayflower's passengers. The difference between General Pouff's conceit and the conceit of his Eastern duplicates was in that General Pouff conscientiously believed that he knew as much as anybody barring one thing, and that favored others knew as much as he did; while his Eastern cousins not only knew that they knew it all, but knew that nobody else knew the all that they knew.

General Pouff was the most versatile man I ever met. He could do one thing as well as another, except that he could n't do business. But he possessed that wonderful, marvellous, and exceptional quality of knowing that there was one thing that he could n't do. He

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did n't know how to speculate, because speculation is a part of business; and because he knew that he did n't know business, he did n't speculate. He knew he could n't take care of his money, because taking care of money is another part of business; consequently, he did n't try to take care of his money. He placed the whole of it, as soon as he got it, in the hands of a trust company, and the company reciprocated by paying him what was the equivalent of a salary.

General Pouff was happy. I've known him for a dozen years, and during that time he has called on me three days a week, and fully as often as that I have met him at the club or on the street. He was a perpetual optimist. To him, the world has only one side — the bright side. His night was never dark, because he absorbed enough sunlight during the day to glow until the sun rose in the morning. Like the sun, he self-lighted himself, and shared his light with others.

In the morning, perhaps, you would find him at the hospital, saying kind words to the poor fellows who may have been much better off when sick, for then they were cared for.

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In the afternoon he might be pushing some reform — a sensible one; and in the evening society may have claimed him, but more likely he would be attending a meeting of some organization for the betterment of somebody or something.

Mrs. Pouff was just as able a pessimist as her husband was an optimist. To her, all day was gloom and all night was darkness. She manufactured, absorbed, borrowed, and loaned trouble. She carried a complete and inexhaustible stock of sadness, sorrowfulness, and disaster.

But she and the General got along nicely together, for she was a woman and he was a man, and when womanliness and manliness come together, no matter how differently each may think, there is n't any fighting dissension.

Mrs. Pouff was not a grumbler in a fault-finding sense. She was dissatisfied with what is, because to her what is was not what is right. She was a consistent pessimist, not one of those apologists who condemn everything, and then beg pardon for doing it. She would not repair, patch, fix up, or make over anything. She would destroy the wrong, the

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whole of it; and upon a fire-swept foundation she would build a new edifice, fresh and strong from foundation to roof.

She was a member of the *Herald's* large and unpaid staff of contributors, and so was her husband. I called them my "day and night" contributors. Almost every week the *Herald* printed something from both their pens, and everything they wrote was worth reading, because both had a point to make and knew enough to stop when they were through. Certainly, the Pouff combination was a progress-pushing one. What the General said made people happy, and what his wife said made people think. Together, they struck a mighty good average.

But the man I loved the most, the man who talked to my inner-self, and who allowed me to step within him when I replied, was the station agent. His personality was unique, original, and of the strongest mentality. He never stole or borrowed an idea. He had n't room for half of what was raised on his own premises.

He was born amid the pasture lands of Vermont, but moved to Actown before he was

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old enough to think a self-made thought. His salary was only fifteen hundred dollars a year, but it was enough for his bachelor comfort. Upstairs in his depot, he lived in two rooms; one his bedroom, and the other his library; and there he originated thoughts that burn and ideas strong enough to travel all around the world.

This friend of mine, this Actown friend of everybody, possessed a high degree of mental capacity and every characteristic of manliness. He was a full man save that he completely lacked the ability to market himself. He freely distributed the products of his mind.

He studied and thought and worked by night and by day, that he might produce the formulae for every kind of legitimate success; but often before he had finished, often before he had brought things to a profitable focus, he gave away the results of his searchings, and turned to other avenues of work. His reservoir of learning, his great storage tank of good-fellowship, had but one entrance to a thousand exits. He stored, only that he might distribute. He was the source, not the

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result, of success. Others were his results, and when the great wind-up comes, and rewards are distributed by the Court of Absolute Equity, this humble Actown station agent may wear a brilliant composite crown made from the willingly contributed pieces of a thousand other crowns.

XLIV

FOR miles and miles around Actown there was nothing but farms, with little settlements grouped around stores; and these farms, as they ran, were truly representative of American spirit and American progress. Most of the farmers had emigrated from the East, or else were descended from Eastern emigrants. They made a business of farming, not a drudgery of it. They managed their farms as a storekeeper conducts his business. Their houses were not single-storied affairs, weather-beaten, and of the vintage of paintless ages, but substantially built farm-houses, with cellars and upstairs, properly heated and ventilated.

In their living-rooms, or in the rooms adjoining them, were shelves of books and files of periodicals. I have seen better libraries and more carefully selected literature in the farms around Actown than I have run across in the average Back Bay homes of Boston. True, the Boston private libraries may contain more books in bulk, and there is a broader expanse of covers, and there may be a greater

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number of magazines on the leather-topped tables; but the libraries of these farmers — these business farmers — were working libraries.

In their houses, I found a better knowledge of the fundamentals of literature, and a longer familiarity with events, both past and present, than I ever discovered in the modern Athens of Massachusetts or in the feudal castles of the Eastern Hills, take them as they run.

Here, knowledge was not locked up in safe-deposit vaults. It was in circulation, and of use to its distributors and to those who received it.

Actown, and its surrounding farmers, accumulated working facts, and carried them in a ready-to-get-at stock. They did n't gorge themselves with non-utilities. They learned little which would n't be of use to them and to their fellows. The information they possessed was workable.

On the dividing line I had leased a house — to be the material home for Mary and me.

The *Herald* was so deeply founded in public esteem and confidence that a man with



Here's to the bride elect.

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half of my alleged ability and a third of my ambition could not easily have brought it below the paying point, except by extravagance and inattention to business. With my experience back of me, and my ambition and Mary in front of me, I had thrown the whole of myself into my work.

I succeeded even beyond expectation. The *Herald* had become generally recognized as the ablest paper in the city, and certainly it was paying a greater proportional profit for its investment than was any other newspaper within fifty miles of Actown. Without disturbing its foundation, I had built a superstructure as strong as the main house itself. I had added without taking away. My changes were improvements, not innovations. I built upon what I had, because what I had was strong enough to stand it. I didn't have to be destructive. It was only necessary for me to be constructive. The *Herald* was one of those few enterprises which need only pruning for their most successful growth. Fortunate indeed was I in my ownership of so well founded an institution. Generally the new-comer finds it

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necessary to destroy before he constructs, for unless the foundation is solid and weather-proof, it is far easier to destroy and build anew than to patch and repair.

In Actown I expect to pass all my remaining days. I love Actown and Actown loves me. I've an enemy here and there, due to my own fault or to his. There are many men who think differently from me, some who are right in so thinking and others who may be wrong in disagreeing with me.

Here is the best of the East, but there's something else — the utility of the best. Here, the better parts of man, handicapped as they may be with the faults of human kind, are in motion, and the evil that these men do is not the moth and rust of inactivity; here, the good and bad parade along the main street, in the full light of the open sky; and here, the good will fairly fight the bad and win the victory of civilization.

I am among men, good, not so good, and bad; some with developed brains, and others with stunted faculties. There are all kinds here, as there were in my Eastern homes, for human nature is human nature here as well

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as there; but here is more of the fellowship of man, and more of the Christianity of co-operation and of the willingness to succeed more by the uplifting of one's self than by the downfall of another. Here competition, fierce though it is, is the action of healthful exercise. Brother may not agree with brother, but all are looking forward to the reorganization of Christendom, that greatest fraternity in the upbuilding of man, with each member a worker, instead of a shirker, and each a load-pulling link of the chain of humanity, jointly propelled by the motors of Heaven and of Earth.

Between the harnessedness of the Far East and the unbridledness of the Far West, I had stopped to stay.

XLV

THE six months of waiting were nearly over. At midnight, after the rush part of the work was done, and the forms were ready for the press, I sent for my editors and heads of departments. I opened a fresh box of cigars, and remarked:

“Boys, smoke up. I’ve something to say to you.”

Most of them waited with the expectation of curiosity, but a side glance at two or three of them indicated that what I was about to say would not take the entire company by surprise.

“Boys,” I said, “I’m going to let you run the paper without me for a whole week.”

Somehow I felt embarrassed — not for the first time in my life, because I recall three distinct instances where my modesty got the better of me. I have a dim recollection of the fourth event, but I don’t remember it with sufficient distinctness to give it more than a guess-at description. I started to say something, but my tongue refused to obey my orders. Just then my night editor — may the

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angels of Heaven and earth bless him — stood up, and grasping the tin pastepot on my desk, said, in ringing tones, and with great solemnity,

“Here’s to the bride-elect!”

My embarrassment faded like the mist before the mid-summer sun. My tongue was no longer fastened at the back, or at the front, or at the sides. Like a compass it rested on a pivot, and I let it spin.

The next day I boarded the train for Yarmouth, and the following night I was in the old town of my birth. For propriety’s sake, I registered at the Yarmouth Inn, but I don’t remember spending any time within that hostelry.

Our marriage was Yarmouth’s event of the year. I had been away from Yarmouth long enough to have acquired a Yarmouth reputation. Had I remained within her borders, I should have been like the rest of them — neither much nor little — just one of them. The local paper billed me as “Our former townsman, the Honorable Newson New, the eminent Western journalist.” The two ministers and the one lawyer called on me, and the

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postmaster invited me to a twelve o'clock dinner.

We were married in the Congregational church, in the presence of the entire population. I preferred a quiet family wedding, with only our relatives as witnesses, but Mary had other plans.

"Newson," she said, "Yarmouth has always been my home, and no matter where I go, I shall love the old town and its people. We won't send out any invitations; let's invite everybody. The church is big enough to hold half of them, and those who can't get in can look through the windows and stand in the doorways."

The idea met with immediate approval. We announced it in the local paper, and our friends distributed the unusual news.

The church was jammed, the windows were full, and every available spot was occupied.

As we, Mr. and Mrs. New, passed down the centre aisle after the ceremony, we felt surprise on both sides of us. Our relatives and friends did n't see what they expected to see, — a pale-faced bride with dismal curves beneath her eyes, a faltering step, a chilled gaze

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of resignation and exhaustion. Instead they beheld a woman, rather than a bride; a face glowing with the light of rounded health; a body bouncing on the springs of vigorous life. Yet Mary had not neglected preparation, and she was well supplied with the hand-made and machine-made things the possession of which does so much to prevent a man's realizing, during the first year, that while two souls may have but a single thought, one man, he pays for two.

Not as an anæmic lily, but as a rose, she came to me. Our courtship had fitted us to live, to live better and stronger lives, to work more profitably than we had ever before. Our one-plus-one amounted to more than two. Unlike many of our kind, we didn't need to pass our honeymoon in a sanitarium. Really, we didn't look like bride and groom. We truly appeared to be what we were, — a woman and a man, physically and mentally fitted for long-distance team work.

As we entered our carriage, the only hack on the Cape, Yarmouth — the whole of it, the big and the little of it — let loose the first and

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only boisterous blessing which ever disturbed the tranquillity of her sleeping sands. Yarmouth really and truly cheered, hallooed, cried, yelled, and did it with a will, was glad of it, and did n't apologize for it on the morrow; and so far as I know has not yet asked Propriety's forgiveness.

We could n't spare the time for an extended wedding tour. That afternoon we took the train for Boston, and on the next day, the train for the West; and on the day following I was at work at my desk.

Every one of the Actown papers printed the news of our wedding, and every one of the editors wrote complimentary things of my wife and me. There was a genuine spontaneity to it, which touched me to the quick of my heart. The newspaper men, who were my rivals, who fought me in business, became my brothers-in-love. The first time I passed along the main street it seemed as though every man was in front of his store, with both hands extended towards me. For a month Mary and I did n't have an evening at home. We were invited to the houses of the rich, and even to the homes of those not far from poor.

GUMPTION

Congratulations came from everybody, and not one of the congratulators had an axe to grind at our expense.

“Do you know, Newson,” said Mary a month after our marriage, “that I feel more at home in Actown than I ever did in Yarmouth?”

“Yes,” I replied, “and so do I. One of the great differences between the East and the West is that Eastern hospitality is too cold to run, while in the West it meets you at the door and stays with you. One arrives out here on the day of his arrival. In New England frequently one does n’t arrive until he’s been there a year.”

“Or five years, sometimes,” said Mary. “My Chicago uncle used to say that Eastern hospitality runs in this way: ‘First year, don’t see you; second year, don’t know you; third year, who are you? fourth year, good-morning; fifth year, do you intend to remain long?’”

“Good for Uncle Joe!” I exclaimed.

Mary seated herself on a cricket at my feet. Throwing her arms across my lap she said:

“Newson, dear, we have loved each other;

GUMPTION

indeed, we have loved each other all these years; and nothing, no, not even a shadow, has interfered. I thought we loved with all our hearts. But what was is n't like what is now. What has done it? Have we changed, or — ”

“Darling,” I whispered, as I bent to kiss her, “it is n't we, it's opportunity.”

For several minutes we sat in sentimental silence, while the current of love circulated between us, bringing us closer to the rarefied purity of its perfect self. Then Mary arose, and stood in front of me in the blooming beauty of her youthful maturity. As I was about to take her in my arms, she stepped to the table, poured water into two of the glasses, handed one to me, raised the other, and exclaimed:

“Let me present as our first toast a quotation from the *Herald*: ‘Here's to our hometown, the Garden of Man, where humanity, springing from the richness of fertile friendship, yields a natural harvest.’ ”

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